Polyhedron®

NEWSZINE

AUGUST

98

RPGA® NETWORK

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Conventions

Club Mini-Cons, August 7
Cleveland, OH
These one-day conventions are held on the first Sunday of every month (Sep 4, Oct 2, Nov 6, Dec 4) at the Independence Holiday Inn. Play in two sanctioned Network events, join a *Magic: the Gathering* tournament, fight it out in a combat game, or out-think your opponent in a board game. Four scheduled events run at noon and 5 p.m., with plenty of spontaneous fun in open gaming. Admission is $2! Call Stephen Glasgow (216) 944-4036, or just show up at 11:30 a.m.

Darkcon, August 12-14
Oklahoma City, OK
This convention is at the Central Plaza Hotel, 112 South Martin Luther King Boulevard. Hotel rates are $45/night. For reservations, call 405-235-2761. Darkcon hosts five Player of the Year Events, including a three-round AD&D® Game event as well as *Shadowrun, Star Fleet Battles, Magic: the Gathering*, and *Vampire*. For more information call (405) 794-7917 (no collect calls, please).

GEN CON® Game Fair, August 18-21
Milwaukee, WI
The Game Fair is the place to find RPGA® Network events. Everything from multi-round events to Living City tournaments. Write to: Game Fair, P. O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

Shorecon '94, September 9-11
Eatontown, NJ
This convention will be at the Sheraton Eatontown Hotel. Guests include Jeff Menges and Jim Hlavaty. Events include role-playing, LARP, board, miniatures, and war games. Other activities include demos, dealers, anime, seminars, auction, and a dance. Registration: $15/weekend pre-registered, or $20/weekend at the door. Write to: Shorecon '94, 142 South Street, Unit 9C, Red Bank, NJ 07701-2216.

AndCon '94, September 15-18
Independence, OH
AndCon is now a four-day convention featuring huge *Magic: The Gathering* tournaments (with WotC staff on hand) and many first-run RPGA Network events, including Living City, Masters, Grandmasters, and Paragon, plus one of the largest Living City Interactive events anywhere! Darwin and Peter Bromley of Mayfair Games, Inc. will be on hand to run *Puffing Billy*. Bill Fields of GSI is our Play-By-Mail Guest of Honor. Pre-reg weekend badge price is $19.95. Write to Andon Unlimited, P.O. Box 3100, Kent, OH 44240, or call (800) 529-EXPO (USA) or (216) 673-2117 (Ohio & International).

Americon, September 17-18
Clayton/Franklinville, NJ
The convention features the AD&D® game, *Vampire, Cyberpunk, RIFTS, GURPS, Car Wars, Mutazoids, Werewolf, Mummy, Mage, Kult, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun, BattleTech*, and more. Special game sessions include an AD&D Game charity event in honor of Craig Jarrel, with proceeds going to the Children's Hospital. Registration is $12, with a $1 discount for Network members. Write: Americon/Carl "Thunder," P.O. Box 125 Mullica Hill, NJ, 08062. Or call: (609) 589-0556.

FoxCon '94, September 23-25
Elgin, IL
FoxCon will feature RPGA Network events run by MGM Grand gaming club, a *BattleTech* "Iron Warrior" tournament, and a silent auction. Other events include fantasy, SF, and historical miniatures. Japanese animation will be shown free all weekend. The con will be held at the Larsen Middle School at 665 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL. For further information, send a SASE to: FoxCon, 636 Center Street, Elgin, IL 60120.

Kennel Con, September 24-25
Waikiki, HI
This event will be at the Fort DeRussy USO, minutes from Waikiki beach. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include the Arena, Japanese animation, and a few surprises. Registration: $3 plus event fees. Write: Kennel Con c/o Eric Kline, P.O. Box 90182, Honolulu, HI 96835-0182, or call (808) 623-3909.

Dire Consequences II, Sept. 30-Oct. 2
Plainville, CT
This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson's in Plainville, and events will include first-run Network events including three new Living City events, one of which will be a live-action game. Other activities include board games, a Living City auction, and open gaming. Pre-registration is $15, $2 per game. Write to: Dire Consequences II, P.O. Box 251, Bristol, CT 06011-0251.

Hexacon '94, October 7-9
Greensboro, NC
Join us for our 10th year! Hexacon will be at the Greensboro Holiday Inn Airport. Network events include AD&D Feature, Masters, Grand Masters, LC Feature, *Shadowrun*, and *Paranoia*. There will be a dealer's room, miniatures, prizes, and more! Don't miss the Twister-Thon 2, Clay-O-Rama, *Magic: The Gathering* tournament, and other RPGs. Pre-registration is only $15 before October 1st. For information, write: Hexacon 94, c/o Sherrie Miller, Box 4, EUC, UNC-G, Greensboro, NC 27403.

Bay Games, October 21-23
College Park, MD
Presented by Atlanticon, Bay Games hosts a variety of historical & fantasy miniature games, popular board games, and role-playing games, including RPGA Network events. The convention will be held at the College Park Holiday Inn. Pre-registration memberships are $15/weekend, $20/weekend or $15/day at the door. For attendance, dealer, and event information, write to: Bay Games, P.O. Box 91, Beltsville, MD 20704-0091.

WINTER FANTASY™ Convention, Feb. 10-12, 1995
Milwaukee, WI
Wisconsin's *other* convention brings three days of non-stop action, including role-playing games, miniatures, board games, Network tournaments, war games, seminars, workshops, and more! Meet special Guests Wolfgang Baur (of TSR) and Chuck Crain (of Ral Partha)! Pre-registration is $15 until December 10, 1994. Write to: RPGA Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

About the Cover
Artist James Holloway depicts a pair of archetypical characters. It is up to you to flesh them out. Here's this issue's contest concealed on the contents page. To enter, send us the game statistics and backgrounds of these folks. The winner receives the original piece of art! Contest deadline: Postmarked by October 15.

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If your mailing label reads
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this is your last issue.
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Polyhedron® NEWSZINE

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Notes From HQ

Playing Nice

Before coming to work for TSR, Inc. a little more than seven years ago, I was a newspaper reporter. I had lots of different beats—politics among them. Speeches, mud-slinging bouts, vicious rumor-mills, relatives stumping, poll-coverage, elections, and more. I thought all of that was behind me when I left Scripps Howard for the pleasant environs of Wisconsin.

Boy, was I wrong.

There's always "politics" in everything, including our favorite hobby. But political antics among players, gaming clubs, and convention coordinators is in abundance this year. The air is charged with that uncomfortable nervous energy often found during campaign seasons. And I think it's time some of us take that proverbial long, hard look at ourselves and remember what gaming is all about—having fun. It's time to put the nervous energy to better use. Because we're all in this Network together, let me share with you some of this year's political maneuvers and happenings. Let's take a look at *us*:

* A convention coordinator called me recently to discuss one of his shows. He announced he had managed to wrangle away part of another convention coordinator's staff. It took a little work, and he was quite pleased with himself.

* An enterprising gamer desired very much to become one of the Network's Regional Directors. Because his state already had a Regional Director, he started a mud-slinging campaign to replace the individual with himself. Fortunately it didn't work. Network HQ has replaced Regional Directors before—when we deemed it necessary—but we never replaced them with someone who lead the charge to get rid of them.

* A young convention committee ran a smear campaign against a long-running convention held in their city. Committee members spread rumors about bankruptcy and more, causing the hotel to question the veteran convention. This convention was not in financial trouble and had done nothing to "steal" the new convention's attendees. But this veteran convention was nonetheless hurt by all the politicking. And as a result, a quiet war has ensued. I think the casualties will be the gamers.

* I attended a gaming event with a small, but pleasant dealer's room. A few of those dealers approached the gathering's coordinator. They informed him a convention manager from a neighboring state claimed there would be no more of these gaming events here, and that they should support his shows instead.

* Next year two large summer events share the same weekend—ORIGINS and Dragoncon. Though the ORIGINS show emphasizes historical gaming, and Dragoncon offers science fiction, comic books, and more, both conventions boast a good amount of role-playing games. Gamers will have to decide which *one* to attend.

* At a few recent conventions, most gaming personalities enjoyed each others' company and complimented competing products. However, a few individuals have been seen furtively looking about to make sure their competitors were not present before publicly insulting those competitors.

There's lots more. Enough to fill a few volumes—backbiting at game club elections, authors spreading nasty rumors about their peers, and people shimmying around Network policies in an effort to avoid paying our modest but necessary tournament fees.

Isn't it time to play nice, to put our efforts into something positive and productive, something that supports the hobby rather than hurts other people?

If we threw the same effort into promoting our conventions as in degrading others, we would have larger attendance and a better image—and above all we would be championing gaming. And in the process, we would be having fun.

If the various committees which put on gaming events in a particular part of the country worked together, think of what could be accomplished. And consider all the cross-promotion! Borrow an idea from the northeast.

Based in Connecticut is an organization called NECCC, the North East Convention Coordinators Committee. The group is made up of staff members from conventions in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. A similar group is forming that will take in the mid-Atlantic coast.

NECCC Moderator Willi Burger said this group acts as an information bank for member conventions. If a convention has a problem, they can bring it up for discussion and get help on finding a solution. The convention representatives trade mailing lists (not available to commercial organizations).

"We sit down and we set up a calendar about 18 months in advance so we avoid holding conventions on the same weekend or too close to each other," Burger said. "NECCC has allowed the large number of new conventions in New England in the past five years to spread out and succeed. This gives the gamers more options to attend conventions. And it keeps the conventions from strangling each other.

"Membership in NECCC is fluid, but at any given meeting we have 24 to 30 people. We're informal. We don't have dues. We don't have bylaws. We vote on very little. But we have assisted a lot of new conventions."

NECCC currently represents 16 conventions, and assists a few others. Burger believes NECCC has increased convention attendance in New England. "I see a steady increase in almost all area conventions. Players don't have to choose between conventions on the same weekend. And it makes it easier to find judges and staff—both of which are in limited supply—because we have a pool to draw from."

Burger travels to conventions along the east coast and to the midwest, and he has noticed the air of competition in some places. "This is not acceptable behavior in polite company," he said. "If conventions cooperate, it is better for the hobby." Burger runs ConnCon, a gaming convention in Connecticut. He said he keeps track of where his attendees come from via a line on the registration form. "Word of mouth is the big one," he says. "Next is they heard about us because they picked up a flyer at

another con. That's a huge draw for us. If they don't go to the other con, or the other con isn't there, they aren't going to pick up the flyer and we won't get them. There's very few people who only go to one convention."

Convention committees wanting more information on NECCC, or who are interested in forming their own committee, can write to:

Willi Burger
350 Route 39 North
New Fairfield, CT 06812-2306

Away from the coast is the Network-supported Midwest Gaming Convention Association, which covers Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Ontario. The organization plans to expand further next year.

It produces *Convention Contact*, a bi-monthly newsletter of convention listings, news, and retailer coupons. The organization promotes gaming by helping plan and advertise conventions and game activities. MGCA will share judge lists and mailing lists and has contacts with several game manufacturers.

The members of the MGCA are all Network members, and the *Convention Contact* editor is veteran judge Warren Dimock. For information on this group, write to:

MGCA
1325 Ridge Road
Homewood, IL., 60430

Some groups could consider following the example of historical gamers who years ago formed HMGS—Historical Miniature Gaming Society. Regional groups throughout the country formed to run conventions and promote their hobby. During the past four years the local organizations banded together to create a national steering committee. HMGS works hand-in-hand with the RPGA Network at national conventions to represent gaming. For information on HMGS, contact:

Ed Besowshek
1227 3rd Street
LaSalle, Il., 60301

A Vote for Fair Play

Network HQ will not help one convention dimish another. But we will bend over backwards for those conventions that play fair, and we will recommend those conventions to gamers. With a little effort and courtesy, we can put the fun back in the hobby and leave the dirty tactics to the real political arena.

Thanks!

Several Network members put in considerable time and effort to help with our programs at this GEN CON® Game Fair. **Cheryl McNally-Frech**, our on-site HQ manager corresponded with event coordinators to make sure everything would run smoothly. She put together an outstanding crew of HQ volunteers, and has set asside most of her own convention time to manage all the mounds of paperwork.

Chris Schon collected a hard-working and dedicated crew of marshalls to help send people off to their games on time. **Harold Johnson** and **Wayne Straiton** drafted shop keepers and personalities for the Living City Bazaar. And **Nicky Rea** volunteered to manage the Living City auction, devising things to sell, netting donated magical items from veteran players, and producing the slick auction certificates.

The Newszine

This is the first issue of the Newszine produced by desktop publishing. The previous 97 issues were handled through TSR's typesetting department.

For the past dozens of issues, we would edit the material, put together a layout sheet, and turn everything over to the able hands of **Tracey Isler**, who would graciously put up with our nit-picking corrections and additions.

The POLYHEDRON® Newszine staff salutes Tracey for her many years of dedication to this magazine.

Many people have been instrumental in helping us convert to desktop publishing. Long-time RPGA Network member **Dave Conant**, who works in TSR's Service Bureau, deserves a special thanks. Dave set up computer stylesheets, selected typefaces that matched the previous typeset ones as close as possible, and tinkered and tinkered and tinkered to get everything just right.

Angie Lokotz, who also works in the Service Bureau, took the time to teach me how to use the Macintosh Quark program. She helped me through my bath of fire—the GEN CON Game Fair pre-registration brochure—and she handled with a smile all of my questions and complaints about leading, justification, and anchoring boxed text to pages.

Desktop publishing will give us more freedom in layout, more flexibility with our second color, and will let us experiment with design. I've discovered it's a great way to produce convention fliers, pre-registration materials, and tournaments. It took me a while to get the hang of it, but I'm getting there, and my computer doesn't quack much anymore (a sound effect Kevin Melka selected). If your computer doesn't do duck imitations, you're doing good.

In short, we're off to different start with the Newszine. Come along for the ride, and let us know what you think.

Take Care,

Jean

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The Ministry of Art

Ravens Bluff's Newest Government Branch

By Dave Gross

"So what can you tell me, Ambassador?" Chaney poured the old man another cup of wine. At the Ambassador's feet rested a little mixed-breed terrier, apparently sleeping.

Tasting the wine, Carrague winced. "DeVillars' grapes! Always too bitter, if you ask me. Too soon off the vine, and none of the good grapes go to these dockside taverns. They all go . . . . You know, you can't build a good house with young grapes . . . bricks. I mean bricks."

"The Ministry, Ambassador," Chaney smiled, his fine mustache twitching with humor.

"Yes, yes. Where's my soup? Ministry, eh? Well, the name DeVillars is on it, and so's Varro. And that other one . . . ah, never mind. Never should have retired. Too much work to do . . . and that gnome they hired!" The dog at his feet yawned, then turned to give Chaney a remarkably human look of sympathy and exasperation. To their rescue came the innkeep, a hot bowl of soup on her wooden platter.

"Here, Ambassador." Chaney winked his thanks to the innkeep and set the soup before Carrague, careful to tuck the old man's white beard behind the table's edge. He watched as Carrague took a tentative sip, added half his wine to the bowl, then continued in earnest between swallows.

"It all began when they made . . . (sup) . . . made me retire. Dead indeed! Can't a man . . . take a nap? Said they needed . . . slurp . . . another chair . . . superstitious clerks and politicians . . . ."

The newly-formed Ministry of Art is considered by most to be both long overdue and highly controversial. Many critics accuse it of catering to social concerns rather than dealing with real issues of magic. Some claim that the exact balance between male and female ministry members is artificial, and others say there are far too many human members and not enough demihumans. Gnomes insist that no human can represent the school of illusion adequately, though many non-gnomes argue that the greatest illusionists are always human. And some grumble that the elves are represented only for political reasons—not because the elvish representative of the school of enchantment is especially adept.

Perhaps the most ferverent objections are over the apparent snub to the head of the Diviner's Guild, who seemed sure to receive a place in the ministry. When all is told, each representative was chosen not for aptitude in magic, but for political reasons. Whether the Lord Mayor catered to the concerns of special interests is no longer especially relevant, however, as the Ministry of Art has quickly established itself as an important entity of the Living City government.

All of the members of the ministry are residents of Ravens Bluff, though some are recent arrivals. Most are members of the Wizard's Guild; but upon taking office, each member of the ministry is meant to forgo loyalty to the guild in favor of loyalty to the city (not all do, assume most). After much debate, the structure of the ministry was determined by granting one seat to each of the major schools of magic, including the four elemental magics and the "school" of wild magic. A 14th seat was added to represent those who followed no one school. Some say the 14th chair was added to avoid the onus of 13 chairs, as everyone knows that the number of misfortune is 13, after Beshaba's 13 names. The Seat of Wizardry is referred to as the 14th seat, and the seat of wild magic is called the 13th, since so many consider wild magic to be ill magic. None of the other seats is called by a number, though the "first seat" is whichever is held by the speaker for the ministry. Thus, it is possible that the 13th seat would also be the first, should the members of the ministry ever elect the representative of wild magic as their speaker.

While the 14 are all mages of considerable power, the general populace knows little of the real mettle of these ministers. (In game terms, no levels are given, but one can safely assume that none is less than 9th level, and few—if any—are beyond 20th level.)

Seat	Name
Abjuration	Harasiim the Blue
Alteration	Emellin of Ravens Bluff
Conjuration	Alskander of Chessenta
Divination	Oracle
Enchantment	Cluhurach Fair-Eyed
Illusion	Marilene DeVillars
Invocation	Variance Klane
Necromancy	Begoas the Inquisitive
Fire	Larraine Blacktree
Water	Sylvia Dawnwatcher
Earth	Old Mag
Air	Indigo Suris
Wild Magic	Glora Varro
Wizardry	Ambassador Carrague

Harasiim the Blue is a distinguished man of middle years. He is remarkable largely in that he is a well-known immigrant to Ravens Bluff, having transported his entire household to the city from his home of Turmish. He has three wives, as is the Turmish custom. While he pursues his interest in the Art, his wives manage several profitable businesses in and around the city. He is a dark-skinned, slightly overweight man. Harasiim wears the traditional striped robes of his people, and upon his forehead are the blue dots which represent his study of religion, reading, and magic. He wears his mustache and beard in Turmish fashion (square-cut), and the blue stone in his left ear signifies his married status. The stones and dots on his brow are the likely source of his nickname, which he never uses when referring to himself.

Emellin of Ravens Bluff is a woman of mixed elf/human heritage, one of the older members of the ministry. She fashions herself "of Ravens Bluff" largely to deflect criticism that she, like several other members of the ministry, are not natives of the city. She has lived in Ravens Bluff for the past four years, apparently retiring from an adventuring career. Emellin has angular elven features with a hint of wrinkles at her eyes and mouth. Her hair is gray, and she walks with the caution of advanced age.

Alskander of Chessenta is another foreign man, apparently in his late 20s

or early 30s. He is handsome and charismatic, socially active, and actively courted by prospective spouses. Known for his commanding speeches, he often takes charge of meetings of the ministry and is seen as a motive force in all its dealings. Alskander's bronzed skin is flawless, his bright eyes a strange golden-brown, and his limbs as firm and muscular as an athlete's.

Oracle is an enigma to most of Ravens Bluff. He is a thin, quiet man who most discount as a shrinking clerk upon first encounter. He seems to be in his 40s, with clean-shaven cheeks and thick dark hair. He speaks so quietly that those around him fall unusually quiet just to catch his words. His position in the ministry is met with much opposition from the Diviners' Guild, though apart from the snub to their guildmaster, most seem to have no strong opinion of him.

Cluhurach Fair-Eyed is one of the gold elves, a sunny figure with eyes of pale blue. His narrow and angular features keep him from being considered attractive by most humans, but he carries a seemingly contradictory air of antiquity and vitality. His skin seems stretched taught over sharp bones, and his strange narrow eyes are surrounded with the webs of age. He speaks of hundred-years-old events as if they occurred only last week, often putting others at ill ease.

Marilene DeVillars is second cousin to the well-known Lady Lauren DeVillars, and of course many suggest she gained her place in the ministry by dint of her cousin's political influence. She seems to be an elegant society woman with as much wisdom in political and social matters as in those of the Art.

Variance Klane came to Ravens Bluff from Cormyr, where she claims to have served as one of Vangerdahast's War Wizards. Her scarred face and military demeanor lead most to believe she has indeed served the King of Cormyr, and she is said to have advised the Lord Mayor on military matters before she was nominated for the ministerial post.

Begoas the Inquisitive is another foreign man, exotically handsome and considered wise for his soft-spoken advise. Like many of the ministers, he appears much younger than he should. Whether he is from Mulhorand or Unther is a matter of speculation, though most are sure he is from one of those ancient lands. Most of the public critics of the ministry argue that necromancy is inherently evil, but Begoas claims to study the Art in order to oppose those who would use the dead for fell purposes.

Larraine Blacktree is another minister whose position is criticized because of politically active relatives. A famous nephew of hers, Lord Charles Frederik LaVerne Blacktree IV, is alternately reviled and dismissed among Ravens Bluff's nobility, but none doubts that Larraine is a much more serious and responsible Blacktree. She is an active, severe woman of 60 years or more.

Sylvia Dawnwatcher openly worships Lathander, leading some of the Ravens Bluff temples to oppose her on the grounds that she lends the morning-lords a voice where the other religions do not have one. But she has been careful to separate her devotion to Lathander from her ministerial duties, though many priests and followers of the other gods grumble that she has an ulterior motive. She is a passingly attractive woman, probably in her 40s.

Old Mag may have another name, but none use it. She is a fleshy, grubby, dirty woman somewhere between the ages of 50 and 70; she seems younger on some days, older on others. Whether by nature or affected mockery, Old Mag acts the part of the stereotypical rural witch (the pleasant version).

Indigo Suris is another southern mage rumored to wield fabled southern magic. Little more is known of him except a rumor that he traveled to Ravens Bluff to escape punishment for various crimes in Halruua (though others argue that he is from Chessenta or Threskel, or even Thay). Some contend that he would never have been chosen for his position but that the Lord Mayor has some hold over him, perhaps the knowledge of some dark secret.

Glora Varro is said to be related to Gaius Varro, though both she and he deny any knowledge of a blood relation. She is a young woman of surpassing power and knowledge, say most who have met her. But many worry that a representative for the unpredictable "school" of wild magic may prove to be equally unpredictable and unreliable. Glora is tall and thin, her voice deep and almost masculine. Many express worries that no practitioner of wild magic can be trusted, and Glora's sometimes mercurial humor does nothing to alleviate these worries.

Ambassador Carrague is a well known figure in Ravens Bluff. His inclusion in the ministry was seen by many as a way of keeping control over what would otherwise be a wildcard body in the city government. Some worry that his advanced age and obvious senility could interfere with his duties; others believe he feigns his confusion and will be a strong anchor for a Ministry too-full of foreign magi for the tastes of many citizens. In any event, most citizens are simply glad that the recent reports of his death were mistaken, since the Ambassador has become such a well-liked fixture of the city.

The old man pushed back his bowl with a contented sigh. "Good soup."

Chaney covered a yawn with the back of his hand, the feather of his quill just brushing his cheek. "I thought there was more controversy."

"How could anyone deny this is good soup? Why, I've been eating . . ."

"The Ministry, Ambassador!" laughed Chaney. "I mean about the Ministry."

"What do they have to do with good soup?" he grumbled. "But there's enough controversy among the public, and more from the Clerical Circle. None of the priests like loosening their grips on political matters. Ha!"

"Ah, that's good." Chaney scribbled a few more notes upon his little scroll. "Do you think it will lead to real trouble?" His eyes glittered as a farmer's over the prospect of gossip.

"Eh . . . who knows? All the priesthoods of the circle are devoted to the good powers. If you ask me—and you did, mind you—it's not them you have to beware."

"Not . . . them . . . beware. Got it." Chaney smiled triumphantly at the scroll, looking down as one would at a defeated opponent. "That ought to satisfy How . . ." he glanced around quickly. "Er, my employer." The terrier looked up at Chaney with something surprisingly like a wink.

"Now, Ambassador," Chaney said, rising to help the old man up. "Why don't you show me where the good grapes go?"

The Ambassador

And The King

by Vince Garcia and Dave Gross

Ambassador Carrague

19th Level Male Human Wizard

STR: 12
INT: 18
WIS: 17
DEX: 15
CON: 10
CHA: 10
AC: -4
Hit Points: 42
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Elvish
THAC0: 14

Age: 130
Height: 5' 9"
Weight: 110
Hair/Eyes: White/Blue

Weapon Proficiencies: Staff, dagger, dart
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Astrology (18), carpentry (16), stonemasonry (14), gem cutting (13), healing (17)

Magic Items Carried: Nearly any one or two small items you, as the DM, choose to give him. He tends to mislay anything he picks up, so Carrague will rarely have the same few items from one day to the next.
Spells/day: 5/5/5/5/5/3/3/3/1 (Note that Carrague often forgets to re-memorize his spells, or loses patience with the time it takes to memorize the upper-level spells. Usually he will have only a partial complement of spells memorized, and frequently none of levels 7-9. And he always has a few destructive enchantments, such as *fireballs, lightning bolts,* and *cones of cold.*)

Spellbooks: Always changing, as he misplaces his books regularly. Give the Ambassador any spell selection which fits your adventure's purpose, or roll randomly, since that's essentially how he chooses them.

Despite his extraordinary age, the Ambassador is said not to look a day over 100. Stooped and scrawny, he is a conspicuous figure with flowing white hair and beard spilling out over his red robe with golden trim. Almost always at his side trots King, an aging terrier whose coat is dimmed with grey.

Well loved by most of Ravens Bluff, Carrague has acquired the reputation of a sort of divine madman. Some think he's just a senile old coot whose tangential conversations mean nothing. Others find great metaphorical wisdom in his stream-of-consciousness ramblings. Both camps find him pleasant and well meaning.

Because his mind wanders, Carrague rarely memorizes higher-level spells. In fact, sometimes he becomes so distracted that he casts a spell he doesn't intend! So far these mistakes have not caused anyone harm, though gossip abounds about unintentional pranks he has pulled in past. Others suggest that the pranks weren't unintentional at all.

More than one hundred years ago, Carrague left his mentor to wander the world for a time before meeting the beautiful elf Whisper. Together they formed an adventuring company which counted more than a dozen members during its existence.

Carrague and Whisper found themselves the only survivors after a disastrous encounter with a tanar'ri, and some spread rumors that the adventuring company had released the dreadful creature intentionally.

Fleeing the failed venture and all the dark gossip which followed it, Whisper and Carrague traveled far away, arriving in Ravens Bluff. There they turned to separate pursuits, Carrague retiring to a life of comfortable research.

Carrague's reputation for wisdom and knowledge spread throughout the city, until one day the government called upon him for advice. Asked to act as an ambassador, Carrague obtained help from local holdings to defeat a sinister cult which had risen near Ravens Bluff. It was after this one successful mission that he earned the name, "The Ambassador."

Carrague and Whisper—who now used the name Raven TenTolliver—found themselves at odds when the wizard decided to build a tower.

In her time in the city, Raven had become the head of the powerful Builder's Guild. So when Carrague refused to employ guild supervisors in the construction of his tower, Raven refused to make an exception to allow him to supervise his own work.

Neither would give in, and finally Carrague built his dwelling underground in defiance of the guild. And so, friends on the city council appointed Carrague honorary building inspector to show their support.

The position was intended to be a sinecure, but Carrague took it quite seriously, interfering with all important building projects to ensure that safety standards were upheld. His senility and diminishing attention span kept him from finishing any project he started.

Most recently, Carrague was forced into retirement after an embarrassing accident with a *feign death* spell that caused his neighbors and city officials to believe he had passed on. Some speculate that it was no accident, but the Ambassador's subtle and face-saving way of stepping aside from his building inspector position as gracefully as possible. If so, then Carrague's plan didn't work as he had hoped, because the mayor immediately granted him a new title as the wizardly representative to the Ministry of Art, a body consisting of representatives from each "school" of Art, or magic.

Speculation runs high that Carrague either maneuvered himself into the job or was slipped into it despite his protests. Most close friends of the Ambassador publicly and loudly promote the latter view.

When not sleeping in his chair in the chambers of the Ministry, Carrague is often encountered in any one of a number of restaurants enjoying a bowl of soup, which seems to be the only food he will eat. His most frequent companion is King, but anyone who is anyone has at least a passing acquaintance with the Ambassador.

King the Dog
(Marcus of Shadowdale)

3rd Level Male Ranger

STR: 15
INT: 13
WIS: 15
DEX: 17
CON: 18
CHA: 16
AC: 7
Hit Points: 40
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common (can only bark, however)
THAC0: 18

Age: 42
Height: 2'4" (at shoulder)
Weight: 35
Hair/Eyes: Shaggy brown/blue

Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword, dagger, long bow (as a human) teeth (as a dog). A successful bite attack inflicts 1d4 points of damage.
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Tracking (15), hunting (15), running (12)

King's hit dice and hit points are well above the norm for a real dog, but since he is the result of an unusual magical spell, he retains his original hit dice and Constitution bonus.

Marcus of Shadowdale was a handsome young man, rugged and virile, shaped by the hardships of a ranger's life. But that was many years ago. For nearly two decades, Marcus has lived a dog's life.

Marcus was adventuring in the mountains between Ravens Bluff and Procampur when his band discovered that the abandoned keep of a dead witch wasn't so abandoned after all . . . and that the witch wasn't nearly dead.

After slaying all of the invaders, the witch was surprised to find Marcus compellingly attractive, so she reincarnated him as a dog until she could find a way to restore his humanity. But even as a dog, Marcus was canny enough to escape and make his way back to Ravens Bluff. There, unable to communicate, Marcus was given the name King and became quite popular among the city residents. Often he has foiled robberies or pickpocketings by barking at the right moment or leaping up to knock down a fleeing criminal.

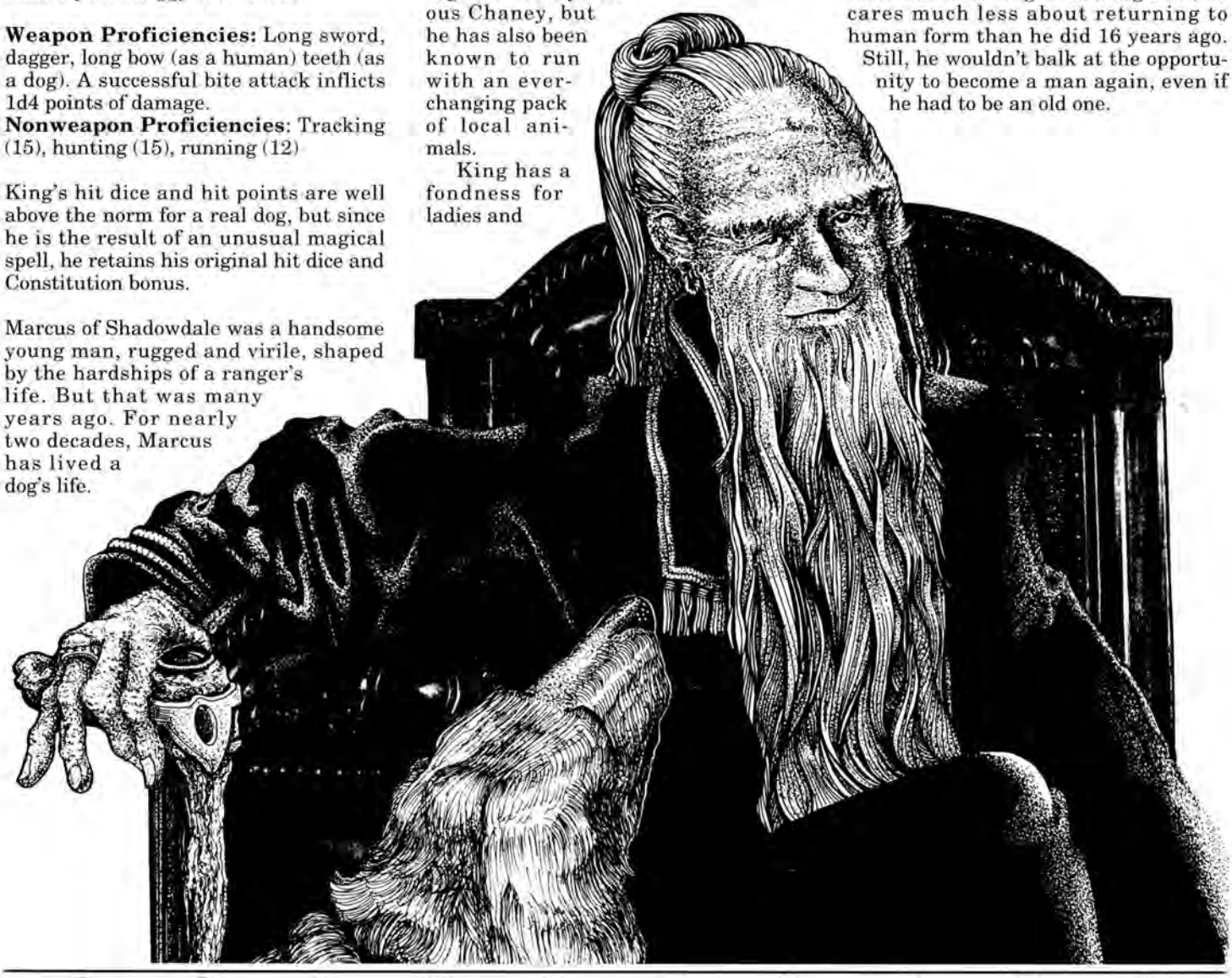
King most often associates with Carrague or the mysterious Chaney, but he has also been known to run with an ever-changing pack of local animals.

King has a fondness for ladies and children, and he is often seen having his ears scratched by the loveliest women in the city.

Perhaps because of the magic which transformed him, or maybe because of some other arcane assistance, King has remained relatively strong and active, even though he is extremely old for a dog. Still, the years are catching up to him, and his gait is slowing.

Should he discover a way to regain his human form, King may well be disheartened to find himself one of the Ambassador's contemporaries. Or perhaps the magic of his transformation will allow him to be restored not only to his original form, but also to his age at the time of the transformation.

Having maintained his human memories and intelligence, King rather doubts he will be restored fully. And since he has so long lived a dog's life, he cares much less about returning to human form than he did 16 years ago. Still, he wouldn't balk at the opportunity to become a man again, even if he had to be an old one.



A Handful of Dust

An AD&D® Game Adventure for Characters Level 3-5

by John Rateliff

DM Background

The PCs are hired to run an errand for a mage who is desperate to complete a magical experiment. They have only three hours to fetch a small bag of mummy dust from a magic-supply shop. Distractions and delays, such as a gang of marauding berserker barbarians and a drowning child, will hamper their progress.

Matters are complicated by the fact that the dust they need is no longer in the shop. The owner took it home with him. If they can return to the mage with the dust before the three hours are up, he will shower them with gold and let them sample his new potion; if not, the testy mage will hunt them down and polymorph the lot of them into toads.

Players' Introduction

This fine morning you're strolling down King William's street in Ravens Bluff. Your pleasant musings are interrupted by the sound of a crash, followed by an explosion. Shattered glass from a nearby window showers your group, and a bitter-smelling reddish smoke comes billowing out. From inside, a furious voice screams.

"My experiment! Ruined! Idiot! Fool! Imbecile! Look what you've done, you, you, you, toad!"

A second, higher pitched voice pipes in. "I didn't do it! I mean, it just wasn't my fault! I mean, anyone could get those two mixed up! I mean, I really didn't mean to! Don't . . . ribbit! ribbit! ribbit!""

The door flies open and a man pokes his head out, coughing and gasping. His hair sticks up wildly, wisps of smoke rise from where his robe smolders, and his eyebrows are gone.

As he gets his breath back, he glances up the street. Spying you, he points a finger and shouts in a hoarse, craggy voice:

"You! (cough) I'll pay you (cough) a hundred gold pieces (cough) to run a quick errand for me (cough). Five hundred (cough). A thousand! (gasp) Hurry! There's no time to lose!" he adds, vanishing back inside.

If the PCs look about, they notice that the neighbors ignore the incident and carry on about their business as if explosions like this were an everyday event (they are). The rest of this adventure proceeds on the assumption that, attracted by the promise of generous rewards, the PCs take the mage up on his offer.

Inside, you find a room right out of the dreams of alchemists. Retorts and beakers, mortars and pestles, copper tubing and bizarrely-shaped containers of every sort crowd the tables. It's hard to see through the smoke, but most of this equipment still seems to be intact; only the glassware on the table next to the window is broken beyond repair, a sad-looking toad sitting amongst it.

The mage rushes back and forth across the room from table to table, taking a quick inventory: "Quicksilver—yes. Powdered jade—yes. Dragon's tooth—yes . . . no, wait. That's a wyvern's fang. Ah, here it is. Nutmeg—yes. Mummy dust . . . mummy dust! That's the one!" He wheels to face you. "I want you to fetch me some mummy dust. That idiot ex-apprentice of mine," he fumes, pointing at the toad, "threw smokepowder into the mix instead of powdered jade. Now I've got to mix up a whole new batch within the next three hours, or else my experiment will be utterly ruined. Months of work straight up in smoke! Unless you can dash quickly over to Bendekar's Mercantile—that's Bende-kar's—and get me some more of that mummy dust exactly like the batch I bought two weeks ago. "Well, what are you waiting for?

Cordwainer: INT Very; AL CG; AC -4; MV 12; HD 12 (W12); hps 35; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (staff); SA Spells; SD Spells; S M (5'3"); ML 14

Magic items: *Ring of spell turning, ring of protection +5, robe of protection +5, boots of levitation, wand of polymorphing* (36 charges), *crystal ball.*

Spells: *grease, identify, magic missile, friends, alter self, detect invisibility, ESP, mirror image, dispel magic, fireball, lightning bolt, protection from normal missiles, emotion (hopelessness), Evard's black tentacles, fumble, improved invisibility, advanced illusion, improved mirror image, teleport, cone of cold, enchant an item.*

Cordwainer is a highly competent mage specializing in magical research. Unfortunately, he's also very impatient and becomes somewhat bad-tempered when an experiment is going awry. At present, his attempt to create a *potion of wisdom* is going badly indeed, thanks to his apprentice having just caused one vital stage of the experiment to blow up. Unless Cordwainer can reassemble the ingredients and re-brew this final, crucial part of his elixir within the next three hours, he'll have to start all over again from scratch, losing months of work and thousands upon thousands of gold pieces worth of material components. If the PCs succeed, he will reward them handsomely; if they fail, they'll find out about the world as flies see it.

Barbarians at the Gate

When the PCs finally reach Bendekar's Mercantile, they probably will not be pleased to discover a group of barbarian berserkers standing outside the shop getting ready to sack the place before burning it down.

The PCs will see several of the barbarians stacking wood against the side of the building while others are pouring oil over it. These barbarians are seeking to wipe out an affront to their clan.

Eight months ago one of their number, a barbarian named Erland Wolf, boasted during a drinking contest that he would travel to Ravens Bluff and destroy a magic shop a wandering skald

had told the tribe about. He never returned, but months later a report came back that the shop now boasted a wooden statue of a barbarian wearing a wolfskin. Determined to avenge their fellow warrior, they plan to kill everyone in the place, destroy anything which even looks like it could be used for magic, and then burn the building down as their brother's pyre. These barbarians are true berserkers. They dislike cities, hate magic, and destroy it whenever they can. They believe women should be completely subservient to men, and they live only for the joy of battle. It is unlikely they and the player characters will become friends.

Thorkill Egilsson: INT Average; AL CN; AC 3; MV 12; HD 6; hps 62; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10+1 (two-handed sword); S M (6'3"); ML 18

Odd-A-Marklind: INT Average; AL CN; AC 7; MV 12; HD 4; hps 38; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (battle axe); S M (6'); ML 18

Pandi One-Eye: INT Low; AL CN; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3; hps 29; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8+1 (axe); S M (6'); ML 18

Heming: INT Average; AL CN; AC 5; MV 12; HD 4; hps 34; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (battle axe); S M (6'); ML 18

Gram the Bold: INT Average; AL CN; AC 6; MV 12; HD 2; hps 24; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (battle axe); S M (6'); ML 18

The PCs have only two choices if they want to continue with their mission: fight the barbarians or stand aside and see what happens. The barbarians are determined to destroy this place and everything in it; they will not let the PCs enter without a fight. If the PCs fight them and win (the berserkers will all fight until dead or unconscious), proceed to the next encounter.

If the berserkers defeat or drive away the PCs, or if they decide the PCs are not worth fighting (i.e., not enough of a challenge), they will proceed with their plans to destroy the shop. With bloodcurdling screams, they rush inside, weapons drawn—and never come out again. Bendekar's is protected by a powerful wish spell, cast upon it by a grateful wizard in return for a year's free spell components. The exact wording of the spell is not known, but it causes anyone trying to steal from or damage the shop or its contents to become part of the stock for a year.

Bendekar's Mercantile

Once the player characters eventually enter the shop, they find it strangely peaceful after all the excitement outside. The first thing the characters see is a large wooden statue of a barbarian standing just inside the door, seemingly frozen in mid-swing with a ferocious expression on his face. This is Erland Wolf, who will be petrified in this pose for another three and a half months. It is, of course, a perfect likeness, eerily like the work of a medusa who turned people into wood instead of stone.

> Aside from the "wooden barbarian," the shop is practically empty of furniture. The walls are full of shelves crammed with every imaginable kind of spell component: anything a wizard, priest, or alchemist might need to cast a spell, brew a potion, or create a magic item seems to be here. A counter in the back has many jars, a small incomplete chess set, a moth-eaten stuffed crow, and other, unidentifiable objects, as well as a pile of dusty books. Pots, apparently full of yet more stuff, hang from the ceiling. A curtained doorway behind the counter presumably separates the showroom from the rest of the shop.

If the berserkers rushed in before the PCs could stop them, they appear to have vanished without a trace (each character has a one-in-six chance of spotting them among a small set of unusual chessmen at one end of the counter). The "stuffed crow" (it is, in fact, only sleeping) is a familiar belonging to the two Narrs. It awakens if touched or if anyone tries to go behind the counter, croaking crossly "Rrruack! Bailey! Bailey! Rrruack!."

Hearing her name, Bailey enters through the curtain at the back, smiles, welcomes the PCs to the shop, and asks what she can do for them. Once the PCs attempt to explain their errand, they discover that they don't have enough information, particularly if they don't know the name of the mage who hired them (if they didn't ask in the first encounter, they don't know). A lot of mages buy their supplies here, and more than one has bought mummy dust in the past few weeks. Furthermore, not just any old mummy dust will do; Cordwainer asked them to get him more of the same batch. If the players have forgotten this, the DM might want to have Bailey nudge their memory with a few helpful questions ("did he ask for a specific mummy, or just any old dust?").

Eventually the PCs should be able to describe Cordwainer well enough for Bailey to recognize him, at which point she'll turn to the bird and say "Crow—go get Narr." The ragged crow takes off heavily, flying through a gap at the top of the curtain to vanish into the back. Bailey opens up the record books on the counter and begins to look through the past few weeks' transactions, tracing each line of crabbed writing with her finger and muttering to herself.

After a few minutes, Narr, a scrawny, swaying stick of a mage, joins them, the crow perched on his shoulder. When he can't remember having made the sale either, he mumbles "Weren't me—must'a been Narr" and orders his familiar "Go get Narr," upon which the bird once again lurches into the air and vanishes into the back again. Shortly thereafter the other Narr appears, somewhat bleary-eyed, with the crow.

This Narr, whose mumble is even worse, also denies any knowledge of the transaction. After several more minutes' fruitless searching on the part of the three shopkeepers, the crow, and the PCs, Bailey at last finds the correct entry: "Sold, to Cordwainer the mage, one-third of the dust of the mummy of the great vizier Hopet-an-Seti. Price, 500 pieces of gold."

She now remembers that Bendekar wanted to find out more about Hopet-an-Seti, who was rumored to have been a great sage, and decided to keep the rest of the mummy dust for himself as a souvenir; he took it home with him a week ago. Bendekar is currently out-of-town on business, but for 500 gp Bailey will give the PCs a receipt for half the remaining dust and tell them to take it to Bendekar's housekeeper, explain the situation, and ask him to let them collect the purchase.

If the PCs don't have 500 gp, she will take however much they have, plus some of their goods in collateral. Characters carrying money who pretend to be penniless are unlikely to fool her unless their valuables are very well hidden: Bailey is an experienced thief whose specialty is sizing up potential targets

for one of the local thieves' guilds. If they are honestly broke, she will offer them the receipt if they are willing to each sign a promissory note agreeing to work off the debt.

If any PC thief is so foolish as to attempt to pickpocket any item from the shop, there is a blinding flash of light and the character vanishes—only to reappear in the form of the familiar's stand, his arms extended to form the perch. The same occurs if Bailey, Narr, or Narr are attacked while in the shop.

Bailey: INT Very; AL CG; AC 9; MV 12; HD 4; hps 18; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (short sword); S M (5'4"); ML 18

Bailey has been working for Bendekar for a little less than a year, but she's already become a popular fixture at the shop. Genuinely friendly, helpful, and attractive, she does her best to make customers feel welcome. Bendekar hired her for her appraising skills; he's come to value the way her charisma and warmth brighten the shop as well.

What Bendekar does not know is that Bailey is a spy placed in his shop by The Four Ravens, Ravens Bluff's underground Thieves' Guild. While the Ravens know better than to try to steal from the shop itself (all curses aside, Bendekar pays them a 10% tithe of his profits), they also know that most newcomers to town pass through the Mercantile at some point. Bailey's job is to size up potential targets for the guild from the folks that pass through Bendekar's doors. When she sees rich-looking newcomers or passing adventurers loaded down with more treasure than is good for them, she quietly passes word along to John Porter, the Ravens' secret guildmaster, and such folk often find themselves relieved of their excess wealth within the next 48 hours. Since Bailey never participates in any of the jobs herself, her role in them has so far gone completely unsuspected.

Bailey gets along well with Narr (both of him) and Crow. She finds Bendekar himself very attractive and is pleased to have recently caught his eye. She'd like to become his fourth wife someday, but is confident enough not to be in any rush. Hence, she never flirts with customers and is careful not to act in a way that will give away her cover.

Narr and Narr: INT Average; AL CG; AC 8; MV 12; HD 4; hps 12; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SA Spells; SD Spells; S M (5'6"); ML 13

Magic items: *Ring of protection +1* (Narr #1). *rod of cancellation* (Narr #2). potions: *healing* (Narr #1), *invisibility* (Narr #2). small silver mirror (Narr #1). crow food (Narr #2).

Spells (both): *identify x2,mending, knock,wizard lock*

No, you're not seeing double. Narr is an adventuring partner of Bendekar's now fallen on hard times because of his drinking habit. He's still a competent mage when sober, but his inability to remain that way put an end to his adventuring career a few years back. Bendekar came to his old friend's rescue, offering him a job using his *identify* spells to help identify, classify, and sort the things people brought into his shops to sell.

The two Narrs are the result of a poorly-worded *wish* granted the mage after he freed a grateful djinn from her millennia-long imprisonment (he'd actually only been trying to see if the bottle contained any potables). When asked if there was anything he wanted, the befuddled mage said he sometimes wished there were two of him so that one could drink and loaf while the other took care of business. An instant later, his wish came true. Both Narrs are identical in appearance and abilities; both have the same set of memories up until that point; both have the same bad habits. No one, not even they, can tell which is the original and which the duplicate. The two Narrs have adapted by trading off: one gets to work while the other sleeps. While it's a terribly confusing arrangement for everybody else, it seems to work for them.

Crow: INT Average; AL N; AC 7; MV 1, Fl 36; HD 1; hps 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA Eye peck; S M (1'); ML 18

Crow is Narr's familiar. Only Crow can tell the two identical Narrs apart; no one knows how he does this. Unusually intelligent for a bird, Crow is getting on in years and spends most of his time sleeping on his perch.

He often gets second-hand hangovers courtesy of his psychic link with his masters, but he also knows he's long since passed the allotted lifespan of his species. He suspects his familiar status is all that's keeping him alive. As such, he's willing to put up with the endless headaches. He looks ancient, like a badly-stuffed museum exhibit with some of its feathers falling out.

Once the player characters are ready to continue with their mission, Bailey will give them directions to Bendekar's house. If they'd like a guide, she'll send Crow with them.

Drowning Lessons

As the PCs cross a bridge, they hear a commotion far below. Looking over, they see a small child seems to be drowning in the river. The PCs can avoid getting involved if they wish, but good-aligned characters will probably value the life of a five-year old girl above a magical experiment.

The child will disappear under the surface after 60 seconds of real time. If the players begin to argue about the course of action they should take, the point will soon become moot: the child will become unconscious almost immediately after submerging and will drown within a few melee rounds.

The fastest way to reach the child is to dive from the bridge. It is 30 feet to the water. Characters with the swimming proficiency who make their ability checks will be able to dive into the water safely; those who fail suffer 1d12 points of damage. A character who can swim will be able to reach the drowning girl and drag her to safety without difficulty. A heroic but rash character who doesn't know how to swim will be able to stay afloat for a number of rounds equal to his or her armor class plus 1d6. If the characters succeed in rescuing the little girl, they will be thanked by the child's frantic mother, who will take off the amulet she wears on a chain and place it about the neck of the character who, in the DM's judgment, contributed most in the rescue. This family heirloom is a *necklace of memory enhancement*. It makes the wearer immune to natural and magical memory losses, including from spells such as *forget*. Further, the wearer can recall any sight or conversation or any book he read within the previous week. The necklace does not improve spell-casting ability.

Note that if the PC carrying Bailey's receipt jumps into the river, it may complicate matters in the next encounter.

"You Rang?"

Once the PCs finally reach their destination, they find that their guide or directions has led them to the house's back door. This is deliberate; the front door is impassable because it opens

inward, and tons of junk have fallen against the door inside the room, preventing it from budging.

So this is the place! You find yourself standing in front of an ordinary-looking door in a nondescript house that on most days you'd probably pass by without a second thought. The door is on a quiet sidestreet, and there's nobody in sight. A rusty old bellpull can be seen on the upper left of the doorframe. You smell the delicious aroma of fresh baking.

Pulling the bellstring sets off a cacophony which sounds like a hundred steeples ringing their bells at the same time. The racket lasts a long minute.

The noise finally stops, except for the ringing in your ears. As soon as silence is restored, the door swings open (crrreak . . .). Beyond you take in a brightly-lit room—obviously a kitchen.

The air is filled with the smell of muffins, and the muffins themselves sit cooling on the counter. There's a sink with its own small pump, a wood-burning stove, a small wood-bin, and a large wooden table with what looks like a recipe-book open on it, as well as several loose sheets of paper and a quill in an ink well.

Glancing down, you see an elderly halfling with neatly-brushed white hair standing on the welcome mat. He wears an immaculate butler's uniform; the effect is only slightly spoiled by his rolled-up sleeves and the apron he wears over it. He looks up at you with icy calm and says "You rang?"

This is Pence, Bendekar's personal cook and butler. With polite hauteur he will ask the PCs' business, inform them that he regrets to say Mr. Bendekar is away at present, and starts to close the door. If they show him the receipt from Bailey, he will fish a pair of spectacles out of his shirt pocket and read it carefully before inviting them inside. Assuming the PCs are reasonably straightforward and polite to the old chap, he will explain the situation (Crow, for his part, will flop over to a stand in the corner and nibble on a dried biscuit before tucking his head under one wing and going to sleep).

Bendekar is indeed away. Pence has no objection to their taking away the mummy dust, given the urgency of the situation, but he doesn't know exactly where it is. They're welcome to search for it, but he doubts they'll find it in time (the reason why will become apparent to them as soon as they leave the kitchen).

If they've been unusually polite, he'll mention that he believes Bendekar has a *locate objects* spell on a scroll they're welcome to use, if they can find it. He thinks it's probably in the library—perhaps the bedroom or the den. If asked where the library is, he will either be laconic ("upstairs") or at his most politely insulting ("A library, sir. Lye-burr-air-ee. You wouldn't have heard of one before, perhaps. A room full of books—do you know what a book is, sir?"), depending on the questioner's earlier behavior.

Pence will not offer the PCs any of the muffins, however well-behaved they have been, although he might offer then some tea and crumpets. If he learns that a character has taken one of the fresh-baked muffins while he wasn't looking, he will become mildly distressed, remarking, "Oh dear, such a pity." He will not elaborate. The reason for this is that all the muffins are laced with a mild poison which will cause anyone eating them to begin suffering stomach cramps roughly half-an-hour or so later. Unless treated with a *neutralize poison* spell or potion, the character's condition will slowly worsen over the next several hours until he or she is left effectively helpless from cramps, diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting. It will take strickened characters 2-7 (1d6+1) days to fully recover. Pence will, naturally, try to conceal the muffins' toxic nature, saying that they might be "too rich" for the characters' systems.

Pence: INT Exceptional; AL LE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 8 (T8); hps 28; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (kitchen knife); SA Backstab x3, 30' infravision; S S (3'); ML 14

This ancient halfling serves as Bendekar's cook and, to some extent, housekeeper. Venerable and kindly in appearance, he is far, far more dangerous than he looks. Pence is in fact a retired assassin with a highly developed gift for poisons. Some 90 years ago he pulled off a daring and dangerous mission, the assassination of a young elf-lord who was attempting to organize a crusade against the drow. He has been on the run or in hiding ever since. Elves have long lives and even longer memories, and friends of the murdered elf-lord are still looking to bring his killer to justice. Bendekar knows his cook is sometimes unaccountedly shy and guesses that he's hiding from someone, but he doesn't know who or why. Even if he learned the whole story, he would not give away his old friend for something that happened so long ago and far away.

An impeccable butler, Pence keeps Bendekar's kitchen, his own room, and Crystal's room spotlessly clean and well-organized. These are the only rooms of the entire house to which these adjectives can honestly be applied. Pence is a superb cook; his specialties are breads, cobblers, and pastries. But uninvited snackers had best beware: Pence has long been experimenting with the use of toxins as seasonings, and many of his concoctions, while delicious, are quite lethal. Pence is quite proud of his researches, and has compiled a cookbook detailing his most successful recipes.

This cookbook (neatly handwritten and currently open on the kitchen table) is entirely normal in appearance, although anyone with knowledge of cooking (e.g., the cooking proficiency) who examines its recipes will find most of them quite puzzling. This is because Pence uses the names of spices as a code, each "spice" actually being a specific toxin; using the actual spices named in a recipe would result in an inedible mess. The code describing which spice-name represents which poison is hidden by a *secret page* (cast by Pence from a scroll) on the flyleaf. For added safety, Pence scribed the list in Thieves' Cant. Thus *dispel magic* will make the invisible writing appear; a combination of *true seeing* with *comprehend languages* will reveal his secret to all eyes.

Pence has also made a second, and even greater, discovery: a way of making a person immune to virtually any ingested toxin through a system rather like staggered vaccinations. He gives the subject repeated tiny doses at regularly staged intervals, gradually increasing the amount until he or she builds up an immunity and the poison no longer affects him or her. Both he and Bendekar have undergone this "seasoning" (without the latter's knowledge, one might add!). Pence is shy about making his researches public while he's still alive due to a fatal accident involving Bendekar's third wife, who fell ill and

died suddenly after a late-night raid of the pantry (Bendekar is unaware of Pence's role in Crystal's death). Pence's cookbook might be worth as much as 10,000 gold pieces to the right buyer.

Needle in the Haystack

Of all the rooms in Bendekar's house, only the kitchen, Pence's room, and the coffin room are uncluttered and easily passable. All the rest are chocked with Bendekar's "treasures"—a miscellaneous collection of junk of all sizes and descriptions. Bendekar is a hopeless packrat who buys anything that catches his eye and can never bring himself to throw anything away. The worst of it is that this is his third house—the original one became so full of things that it was no longer possible to live inside, so he bought a second house. When that one filled up in its turn, he moved into a third, and it won't be long before it's too crammed to be habitable as well.

Already the front door is impassable, and the only way in or out is through the kitchen. When the time comes that Bendekar can no longer get inside, he'll shrug and go house-hunting yet again, promising himself yet again that this time things will be different.

> The hallway is a sight the like of which you've never seen. Boxes and crates line both sides, leaving only a narrow aisle in the middle. Opposite the doorway you're standing in you see an open door leading to a bathroom; the tub is filled with papers, and stacks upon stacks of papers and books jam the rest of the room, almost completely hiding a small desk from sight. There's a closed door on your left; there seem to be other doors farther down the hall, but it's hard to see because of all the piles of stuff that's in the way.

Characters who look closely at the closed door to the left, the closet door, will see that it bulges ominously.

Anyone so foolish as to open this door releases an avalanche of loose pieces of armor (helmets, cuirasses or breastplates, knee-guards, shields, and whatnot) which comes crashing down upon everyone within 10 feet. Anyone buried beneath the debris suffers 2d6 points of damage. Only a character standing in the doorway to the kitchen or bathroom will have a chance to dodge.

Everyone else near the door is trapped by the lack of maneuvering room. Even worse, the landslide will cause some of the stacks of boxes and crates in the hallway to overbalance and fall on hapless characters in their vicinity. There is a 50% chance each character in the hall will be so affected by this domino effect. Each character hit by falling boxes suffers 1d10 points of damage. While it is not possible for characters in the hall to dodge, the DM should let each PC roll the percentile dice to see if his or her own character is one of the lucky or unlucky ones.

Once the characters have dug themselves out, they will find the hall is still passable, but just barely. Throughout the exploration of Bendekar's house, the DM is well within his or her rights to demand occasional Dexterity checks on the part of individual PCs if they are moving incautiously through the crowded rooms and passages. Anyone so foolish as to try running through these crowded environs must pass a Dexterity check or set off another avalanche.

A brief description of each room follows; DMs are welcome to expand upon them as they see fit and to add others. Pence and Bendekar have a complete set of keys; Bendekar's set is currently in his bedroom, looped over the pommel of his old long sword.

Pence's room. The door to this room is locked. This is by far the neatest room in the house. Its furnishings are simple: a small, halfling-sized bed, a comfortable small rocker with a footstool, a dart board, a bookshelf with perhaps 20 volumes on philosophy, a small round table, a pot-bellied stove, a halfling-sized dresser, and a small closet. Pence keeps his old adventuring gear in a trunk at the foot of his bed, along with a small nest egg of 200 gp.

On the wall near the head of the bed is a beautifully-engraved plaque of black silver bearing the words "Elf-friend" in elegant script (this is a gift from the grateful drow). A well-hidden secret door leads to a hidey-hole beneath the stairs. This refuge contains several of Pence's treasures; an ancient silver dagger (*dagger +2*), a ruby worth 5,000 gp, and a halfling-sized *cloak of etherealness* with seven charges left. If the need arises, Pence will collect the items and use the *cloak* to either escape or spy on the party.

Stairwell. These sturdy steps are, like the rest of the house, choked with items of every description, but they are passable with care. Much of the available space on the landings and banisters is taken up with Bendekar's collection of lamps, candles, and candleholders of every shape and size.

On the walls hangs Bendekar's sword collection, making travel here even more hazardous. Characters moving at half their normal rate can climb safely; those who try moving at normal rates have the usual chance of mishaps, as described earlier.

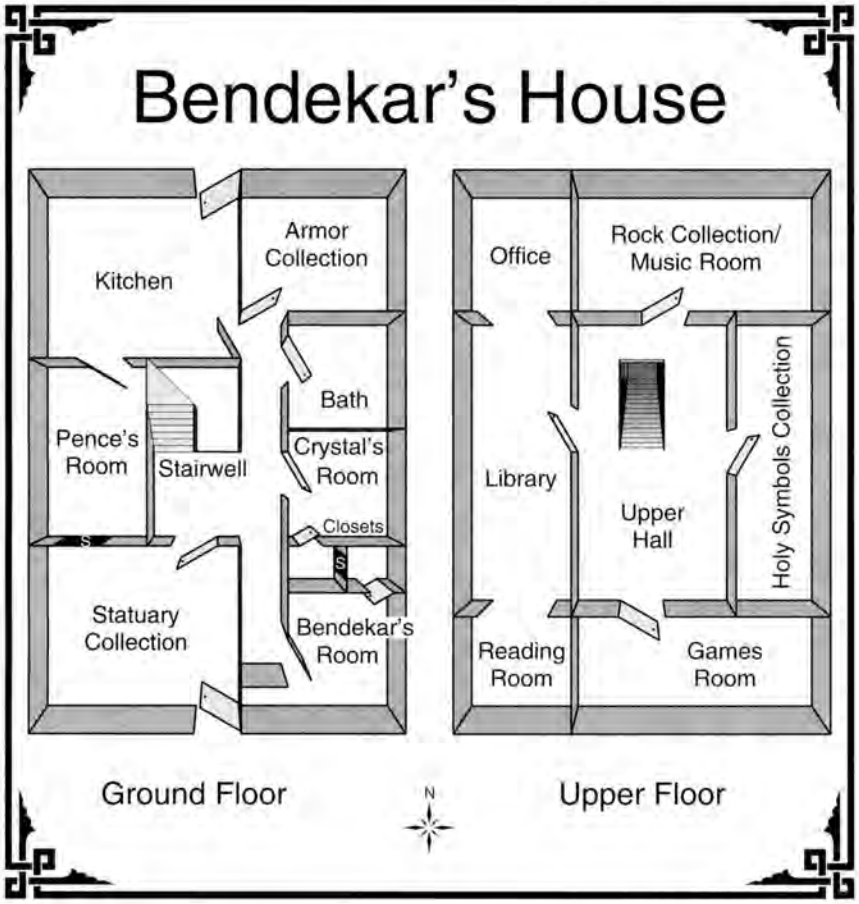
Running here is a sure recipe for disaster: anyone attempting this foolhardy feat must roll half his or her Dexterity or less on 1d20 or come to grief. Anyone falling down the steps suffers 2d6 damage from the fall and must make a saving throw vs. death magic or be impaled on one of the weapons, doubling the damage suffered in the fall.

Armor collection. This room is now completely impassable; if the door is opened, disaster will ensue, as described above. While it would take an enormous amount of time and labor to dig through all this stuff, practically any kind of armor can be found here by the doggedly persistent (although very few of the sets are complete; most are missing a piece or two). One of the special features of the collection, now obscured by all this disarray, was that most of it is armor for non-humans, from halfling plate to a set of magical lamia barding. Good and lawful PCs will, of course, realize that taking anything from the house besides the dust they have the receipt for would be stealing. The DM should note that while Pence would be glad to be rid of the whole mess, it's not his to give away, and he will not look kindly on wholesale looting of the premises (also, armor is a lot harder to smuggle out than most other items).

Bathroom. The books are ledgers and accounts relating not just to the Ravens Bluff Bendekar's Mercantile but its dozen branches (in Daggerford, Waterdeep, Suzail, Ordulin, Heliogahalis, Turmish, Alaghon, Ormpetarr, Ormpur, Riatavin, Emmech, Huzuz, and Calimport). The scattered papers are invoices and tax papers relating to the franchises' business transactions.

Surprisingly enough, any PC who examines one of the account books carefully will be able to discover that Bendekar keeps accurate records.

He or she will also find out (a) that the shops are very profitable, and that Bendekar must be one of the wealthiest men in Ravens Bluff, (b) each of the



branch shops is run by a relative of Bendekar's—nephew, ex-wife, cousin, (c) plans are underway to open a new shop in Amruthar, and finally (d) Bendekar pays a regular tithe of 10% of all profits from his shop to the local thieves' guild.

Crystal's room. The door to this room is locked. If the PCs pick or force the door, they find themselves in a room startlingly unlike any other in the house.

> The first thing you notice upon opening the door is that the clutter that litters the rest of the house is noticeably absent here. The room is lit by soft candlelight, and a pleasant fragrance of dried flowers scents the air. A crystalline coffin rests on a stand in the middle of the room. Inside the sealed transparent casket is the body of a beautiful woman with pale blonde hair. She wears a yellow and white robe and a deep yellow cloak. She looks serene. A small yellow cat is curled up at her feet.

The PCs may believe they have discovered the daytime lair of a vampire, but this is not the case. The body in the coffin is that of Crystal, Bendekar's third wife, who died suddenly several years ago. Her husband could not bear to part with her, so he had a preservation spell put on her body and turned her sitting room into a shrine.

Everything is just as she left it, down to the book she was reading the night she died (*Confessions of a Doppleganger*) lying open face-down. The cat is her familiar, who died the same time as his mistress.

This simple room's other furnishings include a comfortable chair and a small side table with a drawer (the above-mentioned book is lying open face down on this table; inside the drawer is Crystal's spellbook). The closet is full of dresses. A secret door in the closet leads to the bedroom next door. Several tall candelabra hold yellow and white candles; a small vase on the table is filled with withered yellow roses. All four walls are covered by a fine tapestry showing woodland springtime scenes.

If the characters examine the woman in the coffin carefully, they will be able to see that she is not breathing. The coffin radiates magic, but not evil. They will also be able to tell that she holds a staff (a *staff of thunder and lightning*) and wears a twisted silver ring on her right hand, and a golden ring set with a black stone on her left (a *ring of truth*), as well as a simple gold band on a fine chain around her neck (her wedding ring). Her cloak is a *cloak of protection +3* that Bendekar had a longtime customer of his make especially for her.

The crystal shell encasing her has no latch or opening; if the characters want to loot the body, they will have to smash their way inside. The crystal is AC 0 but can take only 10 points of damage before it shatters. The DM should note that Bendekar will be aghast if his wife's things are disturbed or taken; if the PCs take it into their heads to drive a makeshift stake through her or otherwise mutilate the body, he will certainly take revenge. Crystal's spellbook contains the following spells: *find familiar, friends, identify, light, magic missile, phantasmal force, sleep, unseen servant, forget, invisibility, knock, locate object, pyrotechnics; fireball, lightning bolt, sepia snake sigil, wraithform, Rary's mnemonic enhancer, shadow monsters.*

Bendekar's bedroom. This is where Bendekar sleeps. The room is full of old clothes and more copper pieces than the PCs have ever seen in one place. Most of the clothes are missing one button (somehow Bendekar never finds the time to sew them back on) or else are things he has outgrown but can't bring himself to throw away. The clothes-stuffed closet has a secret door to the closet of Crystal's room. The coppers are Bendekar's coin collection: he collects only copper pieces and has thousands upon thousands of specimens from all over Toril, some extremely old. There are a fair number of valuable pieces here amongst the rest, but sorting them out would require hours of patient work, as well as a collector's knowledge. As a rule of thumb, there is a 1% chance of any individual coin being worth more than a copper.

Statuary collection. This large room was once the main living room and front hall, but it long ago became too full to move through. Statutes large and small can be found here. Some of them are art masterpieces, while others are quite ghastly (Bendekar has several petrified victims of a medusa here, as well

as more conventional sculpture). There are even a few standing stone monoliths, and one henge trilithon in the center of the room, the lesser statues standing around them. One standing stone, several statues, and many boxes of statuettes have fallen against the door to the outside, completely blocking it and making it impossible to open.

Upper hallway. A bannister of dark carved wood surrounds the open space of the stairwell; both it and the walls of the hallway are hung with the rest of Bendekar's weapon collection. Just about any kind of weaponry imaginable can be found here: morning stars and maces, axes and a vast array of knives, collapsible lances and every kind of polearm ever made (guisarmes, glaives, voulges, fauchards, bardiches, halbards, ranseurs, spetums, partisans, pikes, and even the infamous bec de corbin and "lucern hammer"). As with the stairwell itself, all these sharp pointy items lying around make this a hazardous area to move in; characters will no doubt realize this and take appropriate care.

Games room. This room holds Bendekar's game collection—cards, boards, miniatures, rule books, and a mort of dice. There are more than 40 chess sets alone, ranging from a partial scrimshaw set carved by a Great Glacier clan to a magnificent jewelled set with pieces enchanted to move themselves when a player calls out a move. This room, while crowded, is still passable (just); Bendekar and Pence sometimes have a quiet game of checkers up here.

Library. This is where Bendekar spends a lot of his time when he's home, reading. Every wall is hidden behind ceiling-high bookcases, and every shelf of them is double- or triple-shelved. Although stacks of books are piled upon every available flat surface (some of them reaching from the floor to well above head level), this is one of the few rooms where Bendekar knows where everything is. However, since he shelves books chronologically in the order in which he bought them, no one else can find anything. Many slips of paper—letters, invitations, notes to himself, even a few scrolls with spells on them—are used as bookmarks. There are, however, no locate object spells amongst them.

Office. This crowded nook through the north archway is where Bendekar used to do his accounts until it became too jammed with papers; now he does his bookkeeping in the bathroom on the ground floor.

Reading room. This end of the library is Bendekar's favorite room in the house. It contains a shabby but comfy chair and footstool, a fireplace, and a small, battered round table. On the table rest an old pipe, a tobacco pouch, a tinder box, and a scroll with three *locate object spells* on it (useful for a body who lives in a house like this). The tobacco pouch contains the mummy dust the characters are looking for.

Holy symbols collection. This room is full of glass cases. Inside the cases are tastefully mounted a plethora of holy symbols of all sorts, representing virtually every religion practiced in this part of Toril for the past few hundred years. A few of the larger items (scythes, for example) are mounted on the walls. As usual, Bendekar has continued to collect until his holdings exceeded his ability to store them, with the result that the tops of the cases are piled with newer acquisitions. Most of these holy (and unholy) symbols have clearly been used by adventuring clerics and look knocked around a bit. Only a few are merely ceremonial in nature.

Rock collection and music room. This final room houses Bendekar's collection of pretty stones and his collection of musical instruments. The rock collection ranges from pebbles he saw when out walking and picked up because he though they had interesting colors to true oddities, like an intelligent rock, a piece of petrified beehive, and a spider sapphire. A character knowledgeable about rocks (for instance, one with the gem cutting proficiency) could identify some of the stones as uncut gemstones; a few of them of great value. However, to the inexpert eye, they just look like so many rocks. Also mixed in among them is Bendekar's collection of marbles.

The musical instrument collection is an eclectic one: there's a virginal, a clavichord, and a harpsichord (elegant ancestors of the piano); several hautboys (oboes) and bassoons, a thelarr (reed pipe), a zulkoon (bagpipe organ), a variety of shawms, two rebecs and a viol, a cittern, a banjolaile, some sackbuts, a glaur, a gong, and (the prize of the collection) a Mukenize battle horn.

Claiming the Reward

Once they finally get their hands on the bag full of mummy dust, the characters will very probably find that time is rapidly running out for them. It may very well be a race to beat the clock and return the prize to Cordwainer before their three hours are up. If the PCs tear out of Bendekar's house and begin a mad dash down the street, they will naturally attract a lot of attention.

As soon as the PCs come into sight of Cordwainer's house, they will see him frantically pacing the street. Once they reach him he will grab the dust and rush inside with it, hopefully under the wire. There will be another explosion, and more colored smoke. Assuming they made it back within the deadline, he will come back out again seconds later, dishevelled but smiling, proudly displaying a smoking flask. "Success!" he cries. He is so elated that it will take the PCs a moment to get his attention. Once they succeed, he will use a *present* spell to summon identical bags from some secret hiding place, handing one to each PC. Inside are 350 gp.

In addition, Cordwainer produces six magic items. A PC can select a magic item or imbibe one of his *potions of wisdom*. PCs who elect to take a magic item can select from the following list.

Magic Reward: *flatbox, fur of warmth, mouse cart, portable canoe, saddle of flying, Heward's handy haversack.*

If a PC expresses interest in the potion instead, he explains it's a *potion of wisdom*, something he's come up with to help make sure that the city's rulers are wiser than the common run of men. He'll ask if any of them want to try it—he needs test subjects, and he's fresh out of apprentices. Besides, he says the potion shouldn't hurt them, only make them wiser. If it works at all. Which it may not. If it works, they'll get one point of wisdom or more. If any PC drinks the potion, roll 1d6 and consult the table below:

Roll	Result
1-2	1 point of WIS
3-4	2 points of WIS, -1CON
5-6	1 point of INT, WIS, -2 CON

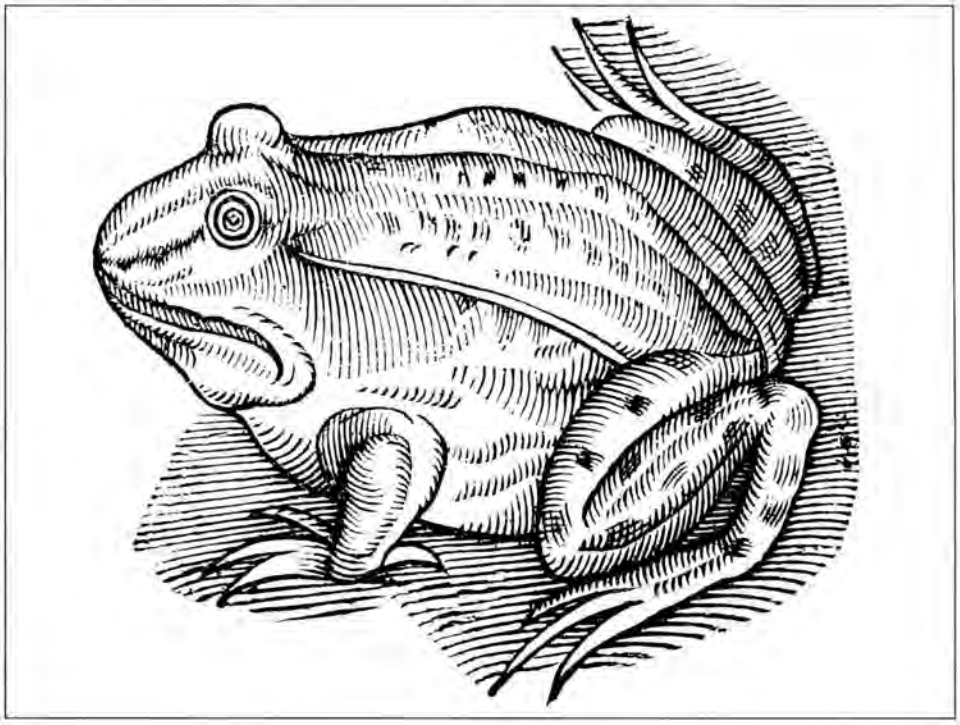
If the PCs arrive too late, they will find a frantic Cordwainer, as above, who will seize the pouch of dust and rush inside, crying out "there's still just a chance; maybe there's still time . . ."

The explosion will be the same, but the smoke will be sickly green and smell of stagnant swamp water. The same result will occur if the PCs return on time but with the wrong mummy dust.

Cordwainer will be furious when he re-emerges. He will ask the characters if

they have any preference of the form they want to take in their next life, listen to their response, and then let loose with his *wand of polymorphing*. PCs who fail their saving throws will be changed either into the form they requested or into toads and flies. Those who make a System Shock roll retain their intelligence; the rest adopt the mentality of their new species (note that this could be very bad if characters changed into toads fail their rolls while characters changed into flies make theirs). Assume that when PCs make their saving throws it means the beam missed them and struck a bystander in the crowd, most of whom will take cover, running for dear life.

All is not lost, however. If they rescued the little girl at the bridge, her mother will plead with the wizard on their behalf. She will soon have Cordwainer dabbing his eyes and conceding to their request. Thus, if the PCs fail because of good intentions and kindheartedness, they will be rescued by those they helped.



Bendekar's Revenge

If the characters defaced Crystal's coffin, damage her body, or robbed her possessions, Bendekar officially notifies the constabulary and swears out a warrant for their arrest. He will not stop there, however; he will also unofficially notify every mage and cleric who buys supplies from his shop and promise a year's free material components to whomever brings the culprits to justice.

He will also notify Crystal's brother, an 8th-level paladin, who will at once swear an oath to quest after the fiends.

Finally, he will let his contacts among both the thieves' guild and the pirates on the Sea of Fallen Stars know that he will generously reward anyone who returns the stolen items, especially if they return the evil-doers along with them.

The result will be a massive manhunt by both the forces of the law and the underworld, the high-minded and the greedy, with the PCs their intended target.

Bendekar can be appeased if the PCs can convince him they made the mistake in good faith, but he will still insist that they expiate for their misdeeds, perhaps by undertaking several dangerous missions for him.

Bendekar: INT Very; AL CN; AC 10; MV 12; HD 5 (F5); hps 34; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (long sword); S M (5'11"); ML 17

Originally, Bendekar was a man with a hobby. As a young man, he was an adventurer and something of a packrat. A compulsive collector, he kept a souvenir from every encounter he and his friends met with: a bit of troll ashes, a dragon's tooth, an orcish war hammer, a scrap of torn mummy wrappings, and the like. Eventually carrying around all these "treasures" became something of a problem, as was the ridicule of his fellow party members.

All that changed one day when Bendekar's party was staying at an inn in Telflamm after completing a particularly successful adventure. After hearing his companions boast of wiping out a whole nest of harpies and being kidded for having salvaged a few feathers, Bendekar was surprised to find himself approached by a local mage who wanted to purchase the feathers for use in a spell he was researching. By the time Bendekar had dug the right packet out of the bottom of his pack, the mage had seen so many other useful items that he offered 500 gold pieces for the lot.

Bendekar had made a major discovery by grasping the fact that adventurers who slew monsters and looted their treasuries were leaving another, sometimes greater, treasure behind; namely, the monsters themselves. With this in mind, his career took on a whole new direction. It wasn't long before he began going after specific monsters solely for their resale value to wizards and alchemists. Demand soon began to outstrip supply, leading to his hiring others to help collect the goods.

The Mercantile

Bendekar's is an unusual store, even for the Realms. This supplier of material-components to mages, clerics, and alchemists everywhere is probably the Realms' only franchise. Branches exist in a dozen cities and towns. Rumor has it that negotiations are underway to open a branch in Amruthar in Thay under the close supervision of one of Bendekar's ex-wives, the iron-willed Lady Idis, and that a traveling shop under the control of Bendekar's most adventuresome niece passed beyond the Toadsquat Mountains two years ago and is currently operating as a caravan in Zakhara.

Bendekar's does not deal in magical items. Instead, it sells every imaginable kind of item needed as components to cast spells and create potions. Since it is impossible to keep everything in stock, there is a 60% chance that the store will have a specific item at any given time.

The Sable Feather

An Adventuring Fellowship Takes Root In The Living City

by Kevin Melka

In a city with more adventurers than an orc has warts, Ravens Bluff has become home to an adventurers' guild. This new organization is the Fellowship of the Sable Feather. This adventurers-for-hire organization was founded by an aging paladin of Tyr, Sir Baldwin, and is operated by him and his son Randellen. It is known to some that Sir Baldwin is disappointed in his son for not taking up a sword in the name of Tyr, instead pursuing the magical arts. Despite their differences in opinion, the Fellowship is a successful mercenary for hire operation that merits looking into by those who seek their fortune in Ravens Bluff.

Working for the Fellowship

With its growing popularity, and with the strong support of the church of Tyr, the Fellowship of the Sable Feather offers several missions for prospective adventurers. Because of the influence of Sir Baldwin, the majority of these commissions are in the name of good and the church of Tyr. However, Randellen does not always see eye-to-eye with his father, and the young mage sometimes takes in assignments that would not meet with his father's approval. In general both men are more than fair and just, and working for them could prove profitable for the destitute hero.

The Fellowship may give some mercenaries incentives for working with the organization. Those of good morals and ethics (ie. Lawful and Neutral Good) will receive a *potion of healing* to take with them on their mission, while worshipers of Tyr may get a *cure critical wounds* scroll or a *potion of extra-healing*, depending on the mission. These items may change with each mission, but those adventurers of "questionable" morals and ethics will receive nothing.

Mercenaries receive payment for completed missions up to 1,000 gold, depending on the task, plus incentives and a portion of any treasure found. Randellen might also supply magic-users with spells from his collection instead of treasurer if they've served the Fellowship with distinction. As far as magic that is not exclusive to wizards, Sir Baldwin has been known to ask for a fair pick of these items to distribute for future missions. If good-aligned PCs wish to work for the Fellowship on a regular basis, Sir Baldwin may allow them to keep some of the more powerful magic to aid them in their ventures. However, such PCs will be at the paladin's beck and call for any dangerous mission that comes along.

Facts and Rumors

It is said in certain circles Sir Baldwin and the chief prelate of Ravens Bluff, high priest Sirrus Melandor, are old friends. Sirrus sends many clients to the Fellowship for help (if he cannot provide it), and their success rate has made the Fellowship and the church of Tyr very popular throughout Ravens Bluff.

This success has made a few enemies in other churches, which are actually losing members. The most prominent of these is the church of Helm.

It is also said that if your cause is just and your pocket empty, Sir Baldwin will pay for the mission himself. This has reportedly repressed attempts by two other fractions to organize mercenary guilds in Ravens Bluff. Such individuals either join the Fellowship, become its enemy, or leave the city.

Despite its popularity with the middle and lower class, the Fellowship is disliked by many nobles who get rich off cheating and exploiting the poor. It is rumored that a party of adventurers lead by Sir Baldwin himself burned a merchant's warehouse to the ground because the merchant was using it to ship out slaves by sea. The accused merchant was not punished for his crime, however, for he covered his trail well and used numerous and clever lies to help discredit the Fellowship in the merchant community.

Lastly, rumor has it that Sir Baldwin and a small company of heroes defeated the ancient white dragon Blizzard near the mountain village of High Haspur south of the Living City 10 years ago. Sir Baldwin slew the beast single-handedly after it severely injured most of his company and killed the remainder. In truth, Sir Baldwin did deliver the fatal blow against the wyrm—but only after it killed his wife, Chantell, another paladin of Tyr and younger sister of Sirrus Melandor.

With the help of Sirrus, his son Randellen (then a promising mage), and the gnome Fankolin Morninglight, who is head of the ruling family of High Haspur, Sir Baldwin and company took the white dragon's head and returned to Ravens Bluff with a considerable trove of monetary and magical treasure. With the cache of gold and other trinkets, Sir Baldwin honored his wife's memory by using it to fund a force of good in the city that she loved dearly. With this wealth, Sir Baldwin finances mercenaries and heroes to fight for justice, and to help those who cannot afford the services of such men.

Members of the Fellowship

The following is a list of the Fellowship's most important members. In the future, other brave adventurers may find their names listed among these men and women.

Sir Baldwin

14th Level Male Human Paladin

STR: 18/87
INT: 13
WIS: 17
DEX: 14
CON: 10
CHA: 18
AC: -1
Hit Points: 74
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Gnomish, Halfling, Dwarvish
THAC0: 7

Age: 58
Height: 6' 3"
Weight: 179
Hair/Eyes: Blond/Green

Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword, short sword, two-handed sword, dagger, heavy crossbow, long bow, staff, warhammer
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Blind fighting (NA), mountaineering (NA), survival-mountains (17), tracking (17), riding, land-based (20), weather sense (16), religion-Tyr (17)

Spells/day: 3 2 1 (cast at 9th level)
Spells usually carried: *Cure light wounds, detect magic, detect poison, detect charm, know alignment, cure disease*
Paladin abilities: *Detect evil* 60' radius, +2 bonus to all saves, immune to disease, lay on hands 2 pts/level, *cure disease* once/week, *protection from evil* aura, turn undead, casts priest spells.

Magical Items: *Holy Avenger +5, plate mail +2, shield +1, amulet of life protection, ring of truth*

Therus Baldwin (he hates the name Therus) is a paladin of great renown in this portion of the Realms, and his ideals can be heard voiced in any church of Tyr on the continent. Sir Baldwin became a paladin with the church of Tyr (Tantras branch) at the age of 15.

It was in Tantras that Baldwin met Sirrus Melandor, and the two adventured together for nearly a decade before Baldwin married Sirrus' sister Chantell. For many years the two were happy, and after five years their marriage produced their only son, Randellen. Years later the family moved to Ravens Bluff, where they became an intricate part in the rise to power of Sirrus and the church of Tyr.

However, the call for justice could not be purged from his paladin's blood.

When the ancient white dragon called Blizzard threatened the small community of High Haspur, Sir Baldwin once again took up his sword and pledged to rid the world of this menace. Believing that this was a job for the experienced, Baldwin gathered his comrades of old and set out to rid the Realms of this evil wyrm.

In the end the dragon was dead, but it cost Sir Baldwin dearly.

Sir Baldwin has close ties with the Lord Mayor of Ravens Bluff, Charles Oliver O'Kane. O'Kane nominated Baldwin for a position on the Advisory Council, but for some reason the paladin chose not to accept.

Sir Baldwin has the morals and ethics of a true paladin, a model that the church of Tyr uses for its younger members (Baldwin understands the need for a role model, but deep down dislikes being one).

He is very selective about those whom he makes permanent members of the Fellowship, and often uses his *ring of truth* when dealing with those who wish employment. He has a deep-seated dislike for sorcery, and this causes friction between him and his son. Even though Randellen harbors no ill will toward Baldwin for what happened to his mother, Baldwin believes that his son blames him for her death.

Sir Baldwin tends to erect a wall between him and his son. He still does not understand why his son chose a life of magic instead of the church of Tyr.

Randellen Baldwin

9th Level Male Human Wizard

STR: 11
INT: 17
WIS: 15
DEX: 16
CON: 13
CHA: 14
AC: 2
Hit Points: 36
Alignment: Neutral

Languages: Common, Elvish, Gnomish, Midani, Mulhorandi, Undercommon, Untheric, Urd
THAC0: 18

Age: 27
Height: 6' 2"
Weight: 168 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Black/Green
Weapon Proficiencies: Staff, dagger
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient history (17), ancient languages (17), reading/writing Common (18), spellcraft (15), direction sense (16), riding, land-based (18), swimming (15), weather sense (16)

Spells/day: 4 3 3 2 1
Spells usually carried: *Alarm, burning hands, charm person, friends, alter self, blindness, ESP, clairaudience, clairvoyance, hold person, dimension door, improved invisibility, teleport*
Spellbooks (containing all the spells the guild has acquired): **Level One:** (all spells listed in *Player's Handbook*); **Level Two:** *Alter self, blindness, bind, blur, darkness 15' radius, ESP, flaming sphere, forget, glitterdust, knock, levitate, mirror image, rope trick, scare, shatter, web;* **Level Three:** *blink, clairaudience, clairvoyance, dispel magic, fireball, fly, gust of wind, item, lightning bolt, phantom steed, secret page, slow, tongues, wind wall;* **Level Four:** *charm monster, dig, emotion, fear, ice storm, improved invisibility, magic mirror, plant growth, remove curse, solid fog, wizard eye;* **Level Five**: *advanced illusion, chaos, contact other plane, dream, feeblemind, magic jar, passwall, teleport, wall of stone;* **Level Six:** *anti-magic shell, control weather, geas, legend lore, project image, flesh to stone, true seeing;* **Level Seven:** *control undead, limited wish, phase door, sequester, vanish;* **Level Eight:** *clone, mind blank, symbol;* **Level Nine:** *Gate, imprisonment, shape change*

Magical Items: *Ring of wizardry* (x2 2nd level), *staff of striking* (17 charges), *staff of thunder and lightning* (9 charges), *beads of force* (5), *bracers of defense AC 4, lens of detection* (This is the cumulative list of non-warrior magic items that Sir Baldwin has entrusted to his son.)

Randellen Baldwin is a reclusive mage whose power is greater than that of many mages twice his age. For the first 15 years of Randellen's life, his father tried to mold him into either a paladin or cleric of Tyr, but this was not meant to be. During his 15th summer Randellen went to visit one of his father's adventuring companions, Fankol Morningstar, a gnome and illusionist from the village of High Haspur. The young Randellen became fascinated by the magic the gnome could perform, and he became seduced by the notion of becoming a wizard.

Because he wished to broaden his use of spells beyond illusions, Randellen sought an apprenticeship upon his return to Ravens Bluff with Ambassador Carrague. After four years of studying under Ravens Bluff's resident building inspector, Randellen was certain he could learn no more from the eccentric mage and went off on his own. Although his father never understood (and still doesn't) his reason for pursuing magic, Sir Baldwin never stood in his son's way; this was partly due to the influence of his mother.

When the white dragon slew his mother before his eyes, the young mage swore that he would attain enough power so that nothing could ever hurt him so again.

Randellen has come to terms with his mother's death. When his father came to him with the idea of creating a force of good in Ravens Bluff, Randellen agreed—but for reasons different from his father's. The mage sees this organization as a way to attain more power than he could on his own, though he is not against helping those less fortunate than himself (his mother would have wanted it this way).

Even though he has no long-range goals, Randellen is constantly on the lookout for any opportunity to increase his power base.

As it is now, a few mages of great influence have been in contact with the young man to determine his intentions. Although he does not speak of it often, Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun has paid him a visit from Waterdeep to discuss items found in the dragon Blizzard's lair. Randellen believes the archmage was also here to determine if he would become a threat to the Realms.

The young Baldwin takes an active role in the Fellowship when things of a magical nature present themselves, else he can be found within his study. Probably the only thing that is an enigma to the young mage is his father's squire, the young and beautiful Chanell Melandor, the adopted daughter of Tyr's prelate.

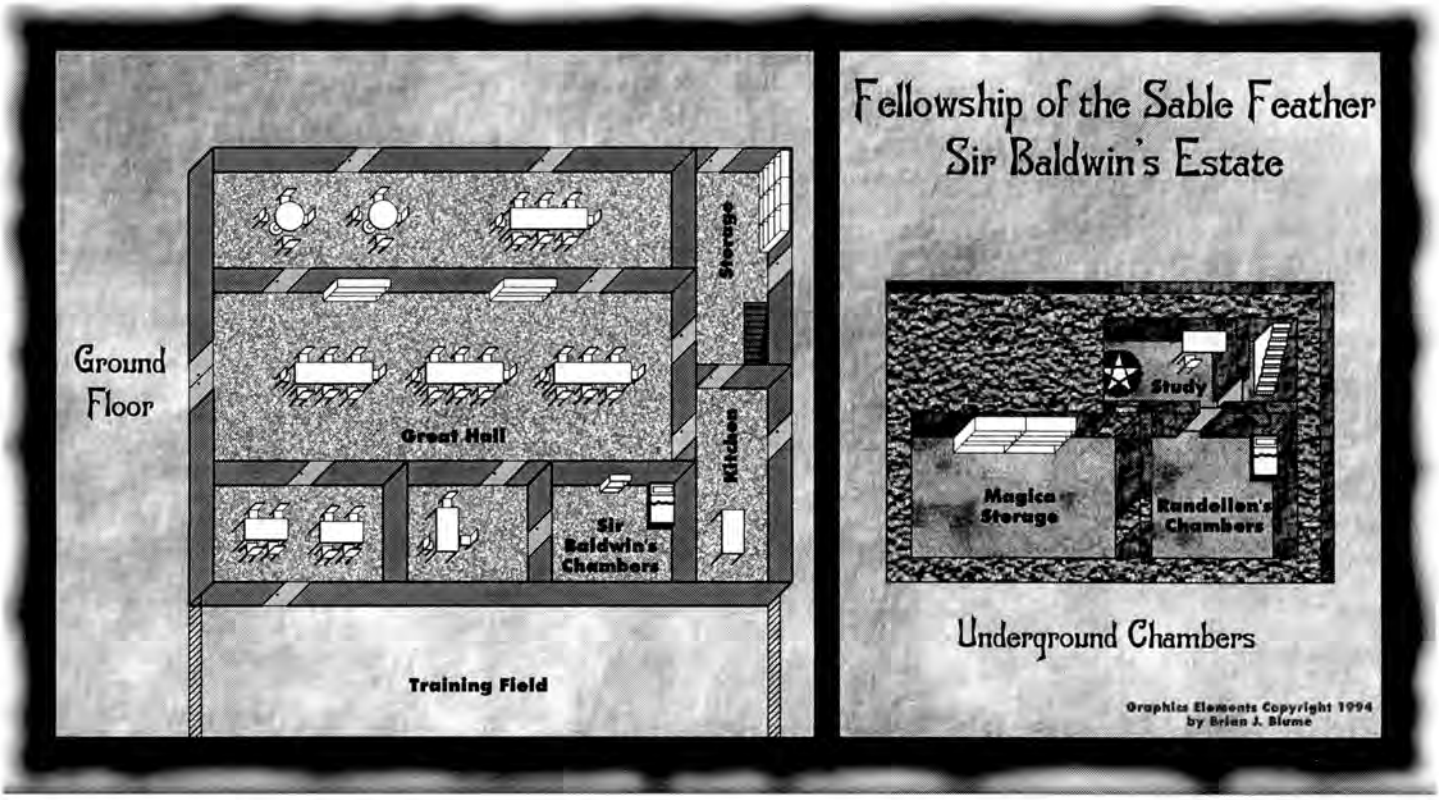
A radiant woman with fire in her eyes and her heart, she has caught the attention of this young man, though he tries to ignore it. Since she is a paladin of Tyr, and his father's squire, Randellen is unsure how to approach her.

Lady Chanell Melandor

3rd Level Female Human Paladin

STR: 16
INT: 10
WIS: 17
DEX: 14
CON: 14
CHA: 18
AC: 4
Hit Points: 22
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Gnomish
THAC0: 17

Age: 25
Height: 5' 10"
Weight: 135
Hair/Eyes: Blond/Sky blue
Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword, short sword, quarterstaff, dagger



Nonweapon Proficiencies: Tracking (17), riding, land-based (20), swimming (16), religion-Tyr (17)
Paladin Abilities: *Detect evil* 60' radius, +2 to all saves, immune to disease, lay on hands 2 pts/day, *cure disease* once/week, turn undead, *protection from evil* 10' radius.
Magical Items: *Long sword +1, potion of healing, ring of regeneration, wind fan*

Chanell was orphaned when her mother died during childbirth, and her father was slain by orc brigands a month later. She was taken in by the church of Tyr, and her fiery temper and heart of gold quickly transformed into paladin virtues by Sirrus Melandor. Soon after she came to the church, Sirrus sent her to Sir Baldwin to be his squire. Chanell, whose name is strangely similar to that of Baldwin's late wife, wants nothing more than to become a paladin worthy of Tyr. She idolizes Sir Baldwin and all that he stands for, and she works hard every day to reach his level of integrity.

Because she has driven herself hard to become a force for Tyr, she has never known what it is like to be an average woman, and this makes it difficult to understand her feelings for Randellen.

She fell in love with the young mage soon after they met—even though he is a shadowy and reclusive person. Sometimes her spirit is visibly troubled by her feelings.

Fellowship Associates

Sirrus Melandor (LG hm P15)
Although he cannot officially become a member of the Fellowship due to his lofty position as prelate of Ravens Bluff, Sirrus secretly supports Sir Baldwin's efforts by recommending his friend's services to those in need. He also helps the Fellowship by healing injured adventurers, removing curses, and performing other clerical services—but not without a price. Such assistance may occur only with the promise of doing some "charity" work for the church of Tyr. Once each month, Sirrus and Sir Baldwin get together in secret to discuss happenings in Ravens Bluff, activities in the Clerical Circle, and the status of the Fellowship.

Fankol Morningstar (NG gm I7/T10)
Fankol is the current head of the Morningstar family that rules the mountain village of High Haspur. It was this gnome that got the young Randellen interested in wizardry, and the mage often consults Fankol in matters of illusionary magic. In return, the family of Morningstar often seeks help from the Fellowship when their village is threatened by yearly orcish invasions from the south. Recently, an ancient tomb has been unearthed by an avalanche west of High Haspur, and Fankolin is debating on whether to consult the Fellowship.

Enemies and Adventures

Because of its success in Ravens Bluff, the Fellowship of the Sable Feather has made a few enemies in the quest for a better city. Foremost of these are the thieves and unscrupulous merchants who prey on the unsuspecting of this fair city. These NPCs can be intergrated into a campaign setting, or the adventure ideas can be used to create Living City tournaments.

Ulann Granzgor (NE hm P10)
Ulan is a specialty priest of Cyric, God of Intrigue and Patron of Murder. Ulann is a crafty, traitorous individual whose own apprentices and underlings don't trust him. High Priest Granzgor, as he likes to be called in private, owns and operates the Exotic Traders merchant group.

This small trading company openly deals in rare and exotic foods, clothing, weapons, and other hard-to-find items. Ulann has many seafaring contacts who can get him items from Zakhara to Shou Lung, even Maztica with a little time.

His prices for such objects are grossly inflated. However, such items are mostly purchased by the wealthy of Ravens Bluff who care only about the prestige such an item will bring them. Ulann pays his monthly dues to Guildmaster Arvin Kothonos, who thinks the cleric is a legitimate businessman.

On the sly the High Priest deals in poisons, undead servants (which he creates himself), and other contraband. He works regularly with the thieves guild and thugs guild, but always through a middleman so the guilds never know where the goods originated.

* Several of Granzgor's illegal shipments have been intercepted recently by members of the Fellowship, and this has ignited the evil priest's horrible temper. Sir Baldwin has learned of the shipments' origins, and he needs a group of brave adventurers to investigate.

* Acolytes of Granzgor have killed a lesser member of the Fellowship to please their master. Although happy with the death, Ulann killed the acolytes because the death may be traced back to him. The Fellowship hires the PCs to investigate the murder.

* The PCs are hired by a phony merchant business to investigate a bogus plot created by Granzgor. The diabolic priest will attempt to capture the PCs and ransom them to the Fellowship.

Thorm Sureblade (CG hf F10)
Thorm is the owner/operator of the Independent Fighters' Guild, and—until recently—has had exclusive rights to the best fighter/mercenaries in Ravens Bluff. Thorm is not exactly an enemy of the Fellowship, but does considers them to be serious competition.

As of late, some of the most promising fighters have been flocking to the banner of the Fellowship, and this has caused Thorm to re-think the way he runs his guild. Thorm also has been approached by a representative of Ulann Granzgor, who has proposed an unethical solution to the difficulties they have suffered as a result of the Fellowship's prosperity. The half-elf has not yet decided what to do about this proposal.

* During the beginning of a mission for the Fellowship, the PCs encounter a group from the Fighters' Guild on the same quest. Those loyal to Thorm will take great offense to the presence of the Fellowship and initiate a conflict.

* An unstable member of the Fighters' Guild commits murder in Ravens Bluff, and the PCs are asked to investigate. This is met with heated unrest from the Fighters' Guild, possibly leading to a confrontation.

Vanessa the Dark (vampire)
During his adventuring days, the young Sir Baldwin defeated many foes—and those few survivors became enemies. Vanessa the Dark is one such rival. Seriously injured by the paladin in a crypt far from Ravens Bluff, Vanessa recovered from the encounter, and the darkness of her soul screamed for revenge.

Nearly four decades later, Vanessa finally tracked down her adversary to the Living City. After finding a suitable tomb, the vampire has been spending her nights stalking Ravens Bluff and learning as much as she can about an older Sir Baldwin and his Fellowship.

Vanessa: Int Exceptional; AL CE; AC 1; MV 12, Fl 18 (C); HD 8+3; hp 43; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 5-10; SA Energy drain; SD +1 or better magical weapon to hit; MR Special; SZ M; ML 16

* A dozen bodies have shown up over the past month, each drained of blood and decapitated. The Fellowship has been ordered to invesitgate because its symbol, a raven's feather, has been found at the scene of each crime.

* Lady Chanell hasn't been seen for days, and a worried Sir Baldwin hires the PCs to find her. Although unharmed, Lady Chanell is a captive of the vampire and patiently awaits Sir Baldwin.

* Rumors of a powerful magical item reaches the ears of Randellen, and he hires a group of PCs to retrieve it. The rumor is, in fact a ruse, a clever plot by Vanessa to create vampires who are members of the Fellowship and who can easily get close to the paladin.

So You Want To Join?

The Fellowship of the Sable Feather is located in the south-southeastern portion of the Living City, in the section of town known as Crow's End.

Nestled between the sheer cliffs to the south and the raging river to the north, the large estate of the Baldwin family doubles as their guild headquarters. Several conference rooms have been added onto the sprawling main house, and a fenced-in yard is used as a training field for those under the tutelage of Sir Baldwin.

Randellen Baldwin has used a *wand of earth and stone* to excavate chambers that he uses for a laboratory below their residence, as well as storage for the Fellowship's assets (i.e., treasure and magic items).

Anyone can show up at the front door of the Fellowship, but not all would-be adventurers will be given missions. Newcomers to Ravens Bluff undergo an intense afternoon of questioning by Sir Baldwin (with his *ring of truth* and *know alignment* spell). Those who are warriors, priests, or rogues are interviewed by the seasoned paladin, while wizards are questioned by his son.

Those of non-good alignments who request work are closely watched by Sir Baldwin, and if anything "questionable" occurs during the assignment this person is never given a job again. Extensive reports are required after every mission, whether they be written or oral, and thorough records are kept of all Fellowship commissions.

Finding the Fellowship is not difficult, and inquiries at a church of Tyr or the prelate's office will point adventurers in the direction of Crow's End. The Fellowship of the Sable Feather gets its name from the multitude of raven feathers that litter the property of the guild.

Several nests of the ebony birds can be found not far away, and Randellen's name for the Fellowship seemed appropriate because of the ravens.

Although the organization has only been around for a short time, the Fellowship of the Sable Feather shows promise to those involved with civic affairs, and it certainly bears watching.

Elminster's Everwinking Eye

More Hidden Powers of Turmish

by Ed Greenwood

The true rulers of a kingdom are seldom who ye think they are. Always look for the hidden; even if ye don't find it. There'll be some hint of where real power lies . . . and besides: the sneaking and peering about is always good fun.

Mirt "the Moneylender" of Waterdeep
Thoughts on Politics
and Other Villainies
Year of the Boot

Last time around, we began a look at the hidden powers of Turmish. Let's continue, shall we?

By this time, Elminster had finished the snails he'd brought and moved on to wedges of the oldest, strongest cheese he could find in my pantry—stuff I'd been saving to put out for the raccoons or to make even strong-stomached door-to-door salesmen flee the farm—and was washing it all down with peach brandy, almond liqueur, cherry syrup, and chocolate sauce . . . thoughtfully stirred together with one long-nailed finger. Yes, I shuddered too.

The Masked Masters

The Dancing Ring is a truly ancient Turmishan cult the adherents of which believe the realm is kept strong by celebrating important events at monthly midnight dances.

On a "Dancing Night" (the last day of each month; this time is known to all Turmishans—who may use it to mark time in casual conversation—not just cult members), believers gather in fields and on bare hilltops, drink from a cauldron of hot cider, and dance counterclockwise around the outside of a large oval ring of lit torches. At the heart of the ring, events deemed important by "The Masked Masters" are presented as illusions. Sometimes old, favorite—or especially hated, feared, or moving—events are shown, as well as recent ones.

The Masked Masters are illusionists, and working the artful images necessary for a dance usually requires at least four of them. They appear hooded and robed to conceal their identities, and they stand within a circle of guards outside one end of the oval. Drummers who keep the dancers in time sit at the other end.

In simpler times, this cult—whose members included folk of several races and many religions; no faith was endorsed or excluded by the Masters—was very popular. It served to direct Turmishan opinion. Visitors were—and are—free to observe the dance, and take part so long as they do not disrupt the ring or the images—(doing so usually brings down a magical bolt hurled by one of the Masters).

The power of the Dancing Ring has waned in recent times. Increasingly, visitors and widely-traveled cult members have claimed that various ring-visions were false, or altered (in the way beings were shown, or the words they were presented as speaking). The aims of the mysterious Masked Masters became suspect; were they in fact Red Wizards of Thay, Zhentarim, or other outlander wizards seeking to twist the thoughts of Turmishans to their own ends?

This debate continues. The identities of many Masters have become known (in some cases, Masters deliberately unmasked themselves at the ends of dances), and although a majority seem to be illusionists who've dwelt in Turmish for a long time, the veracity of the images they create remains a matter of controversy.

Where do the Masters get their visions? Does magical eavesdropping—spying, some say—go on continuously in Turmish?

Many Masters who've been questioned about this claim all their visions come to them in vivid dreams, sent by "The Gods Who Watch Over Turmish."

How much the Masters do spy, or communicate with each other for dark purposes—or just who sends them visions, and to what aims—remain matters of rumor, speculation, and suspicious query as the seasons slowly pass.

Despite this, visitors and young children are often enthralled on Dancing Nights when the weather is fair by the sight of vivid scenes unfolding in the open, in the midst of a ring of dancing creatures of all sorts. In most of the more than 40 known Rings across Turmish, elves dance beside lizard men, gnolls shuffle along beside pixies and halflings, and humans puff and bob along beside dwarves and even half-orcs.

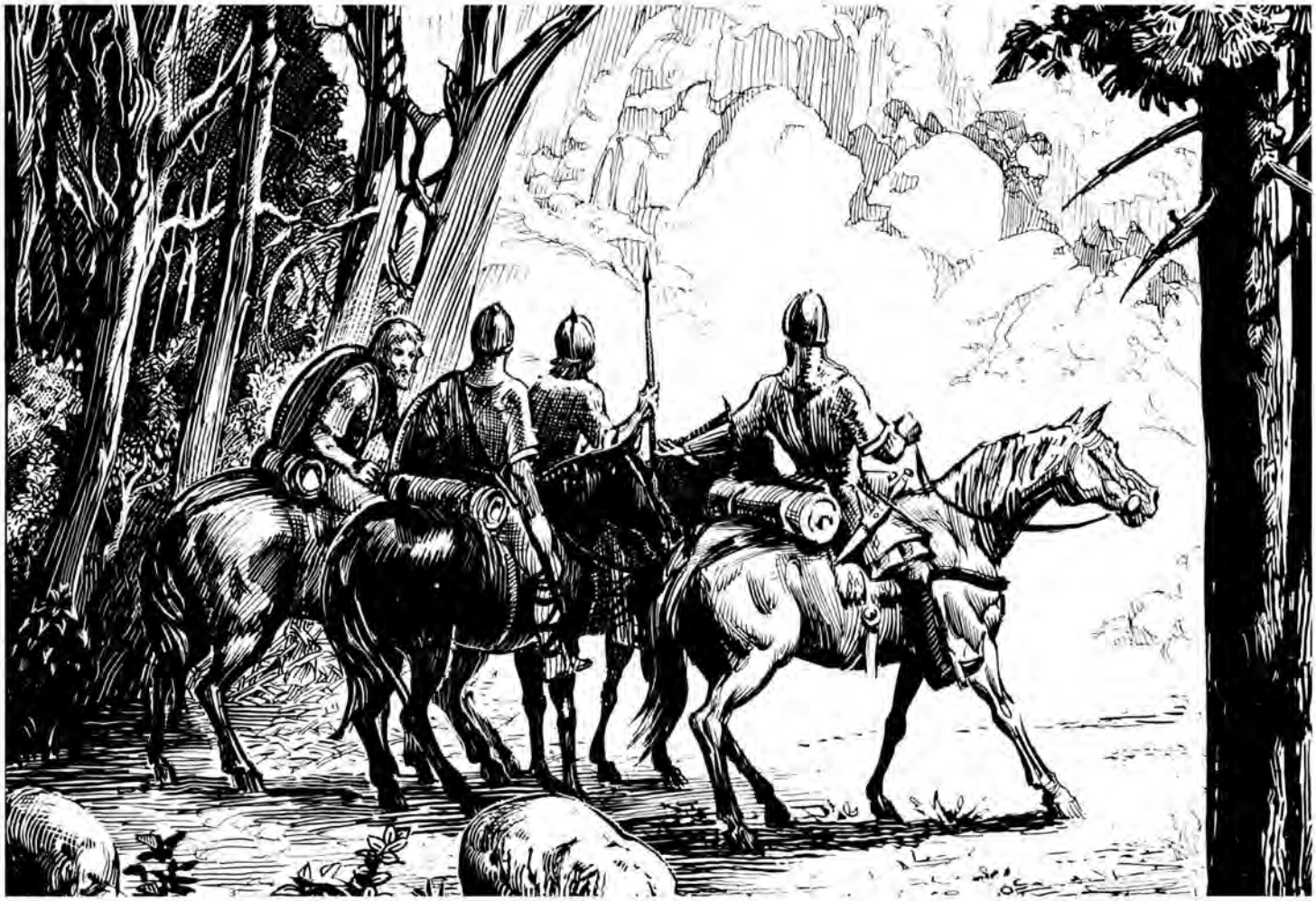
Interestingly, there are no reports of korred (the diminutive woodland race known as "the Dancing Folk") approaching or dancing in the Rings.

The Ghost Swords

The Ghost Swords are a shadowy group of defenders of the realm; adventurers and other folk capable of giving fierce battle. They take their name and inspiration from an ancient enchantment that lies on the land that has become Turmish, woven by one of the earliest priesthoods of Selune.

Their magnificent, many-spired temple stood in the heart of the rolling woodlands between The Mountains of the Alaoreum and The Aphrunn Mountains—and was destroyed by a raiding dragon more than a thousand years ago. Today, nothing remains of it (except legends of its deepest vaults, unreachable by the wyrm and now hidden beneath the rubble of the riven temple, and the earth that has now covered it all, that still hold gems, gold, magic potions, and other riches). The priests perished with their temple, so it is either the strong will of Selune Moonmother herself or modern-day Selunian priests of great power keeps the magic at work.

On some moonlit nights, the enchantment evokes glowing white, ghostly,



translucent images of drawn swords—sharp naked blades that fly silently through the air with no hand wielding them. For centuries, Turmishan folk have learned to follow these apparitions; even present-day militia patrols do so unhesitatingly.

Ghost Swords typically hang vertically, point downward, when first seen. They seem to sense when they've been noticed, and begin to move. These apparitions always fly to point at a spot where hidden treasure lies, brigands are hiding, or lost beasts, sheep, children, or wounded folk lie. Then they usually fade away—although they may reappear if a searcher misses one lost item or being of a group, and prepares to leave.

Although multiple Ghost Swords have been seen in various places around Turmish on the same night, it is not known how many blades can exist at a time. Ghost Swords have been seen to pass through walls, trees, earth, and even living things.

The ghostly blades can't be grasped, dispelled, magically influenced, or enspelled so as to reveal what intellect guides them—nor have the rare few with psionic powers been able to contact them or any will behind them.

Some travelers believe these apparitions inspired the cult of The Bright Sword in Thentia, and perhaps also venerations of a flying blade in Calimshan and in some of the independent cities around The Lake of Steam. (A little-known side-effect of the ancient enchantment is that no other power or being can create a similar or identical image of any glowing, translucent, flying sword in Turmish . . . in other words, there can be no false Ghost Swords.)

Whatever guides the sword apparitions, they have inspired present-day Turmishans to watch over their realm in like manner. Adventurers, powerful wizards, and priests alike proudly wear the shoulder-badge of a vertical white blade on a black field (though when concealment is prudent, it is sometimes kept to medallions hidden under clothing).

Members of The Ghost Swords try to spot all powerful visitors to Turmish, and stalk them (trying to stay unseen so long as intervention is not necessary) to ensure they don't despoil the land.

In the heartwoods and mountain uplands of Turmish, all strangers are kept under surveillance. The Ghost Swords will act openly to prevent tomb-robbing, desecration of (and thefts from) temples. Further, they oppose the covert building of new places of worship—even temporary altars—as several startled adventurers have learned. On several recent occasions, followers of Talos sought to establish communities in the mountains bordering Turmish, and used storm-spells to defend their settlements against Turmishans and militia patrols. The Ghost Swords were founded to prevent the balance of power and character of life in Turmish from being altered by covert intrusions of this sort.

The Nail

The Nail is a recently-formed, widespread group of shopkeepers and merchant traders who advocate a covert takeover of as many ships of the pirates of the Fallen Stars as possible, so as to use them to carry on trade profitable to Turmish—while continuing their piracy so as to harm the shipping of rival lands.

The Nail also wants to set up warehouses, moneychanging agents, and local buyers in important nearby cities such as Airspur, Arrabar, L ıeshayl, Nimpeth, Ormath, Reth, Riatavin and Westgate—services to benefit members of the Nail in the same way trading costers aid their members, only secretly.

Rather than operating openly as a merchants' collective (a ripe target for brigands and thieves), the Nail plans to infiltrate current coster and caravan-company facilities, and operate them for both Nail members and the concerns they supposedly give exclusive service to. Nail members would get the best rates and service, of course.

The Ghost Swords are currently investigating this group, and several members of the Free Council of Alaghn have also hired adventuring bands to learn what they can of who leads the Nail, and where this loose, rapidly-expanding organization is headed. Some folk believe a sinister power such as Thay or the Zhentarim are behind it all, seeking to take over the Nail as their own trading organization once it's established . . . others believe that one or more pirates seek to retire to a safer, landborne life while still making money.

Whatever the truth about the leadership of the Nail, at present it is little more than a confused web of local help-each-other-out contacts filled with shady cut-rate deals between individual merchants. Members identify themselves when trying to make contact with other members by carrying a single nail cupped in one hand.

The Roar of the Lions

The Five Lions is an isolated quaint inn on a side-trail just below the lip of The Allascar, on the steep slopes dropping down into the vast wood known as The Faraway that covers the western end of Turmish. The inn's name has been adopted by a brotherhood formed and based there.

The Five Lions is an organization headed by five retired adventurers. They train would-be or fledgling adventurers for stiff fees, tutoring them in the use of weapons, in bushcraft, and in survival skills in subterranean settings. The Five Lions provide several 'test' dungeons: an old, disused tomb; the cellars of a fallen, ruined keep; and a mine that reaches down into caverns said to be roamed by drow—and certainly inhabited by an active deepspawn.

Many restless young Turmishans take training with The Five Lions, and then hire on as caravan guards (overland) or cargo guards (aboard ship) in Alaghn. It's rumored the inn holds an ancient, permanent magical gate in its cellars that leads to a secret place in Amn—and that the five adventurers who head the Lions aren't as retired as they pretend to be. When strife came to Tethyr, several members of its royal family reached The Five Lions (presumably through the gate), but perished in the woods of Turmish under the blades of Tethyrian pursuers (who presumably found the gate).

The Purple Staff

The Fellowship of the Purple Staff is a recently-formed, little-known network of priests who envision a new realm rising north of Turmish, taking in Telpir, Amry, and all the woods north of the Orsraun Mountains and east of Cedarsproke. The Fellowship sees this strategically-located region as a future trading power: "The Holy Realm."

This land would be ruled by priesthoods living in harmony—the clergies of Chauntea, Helm, Lathander, Selune, and Sune—and defended by paladins of those faiths. The idea for the blessed realm came to several senior priests of those faiths in Turmish, the woods near Starmantle, and around the Vilhon. They're convinced it's the will of their deities that this realm come into being, and from Turmish are working toward that end, sending hired adventurers into the forests south and west of Telpir to explore and to slay monsters.

There are now several hundred priests and paladins in the Fellowship—notably Delthyn of Chauntea (NG hm P17, a white-haired, balding, kindly giant of a man who works his fields due west of Alaghn). There are also a few mages who'd like to live in a strong, stable realm so they can concentrate on research. In return, they'd use their spells to build roads, bridges, and waterways—and fight off invaders—as needed.

The Fellowship sees The Holy Realm starting as a logging and hunting concern, and slowly becoming a land of ever-expanding temple-farms. Defeat of the pirates of the Fallen Stars would be a necessary step. The badge of the realm and the Fellowship is the Purple Staff (representing rule by clergy).

Our look at life in Turmish will continue in the next column (Elminster willing).

The Living Galaxy

The Idea Catcher: Don't Leave Home Without It!

by Roger E. Moore

Two years ago, I drove from Wisconsin to Iowa City to attend ICON 17, a wonderful science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention. (It was great fun, but that's not my topic.) The results of my time at the convention were detailed in POLYHEDRON® Newszine, issues #82-83. This column, however, offers the results of an idea-generating trick I used on the way to and from the convention, on the long, quiet stretches of interstate highway when my mind raced along faster than the landscape.

A key element in becoming a creative Game Master for any RPG or campaign lies in self-imposed practice and training. You need the widest possible range of material to choose from in building your campaign, and you must come up with this material yourself. (No one else is going to do it for you.) What you need most is to develop an idea-catcher, a good system for producing and recording as much creative material as possible. Without it, you greatly limit your capabilities as a GM.

As I got into my car to drive to ICON 17, I tossed a notebook and pen into the empty passenger seat. I knew how boring some stretches of the four-hour trip could get, and I wanted to think of some science-fiction game ideas. The notebook was my idea-catcher. When I got an idea and could afford to jot down a note about it, I recorded it for later use. It worked like a charm, though I was always extremely careful to keep my eyes on the road and pay attention to my driving, not my writing. My notes came out looking like chicken tracks, but they were still legible and were of great help to me later on. (I would have done better with a hand-held tape recorder; maybe you have one and can try that. It isn't worth wrecking your car for a good game idea.)

Notes on a Notebook

Contrary to Dr. Egon Spengler's remark in the movie *Ghostbusters*, print is not dead. I couldn't count the number of published authors from every field who repeat the importance of writing down your ideas. The usefulness of this point is not confined to writers, however. No other tactic does as much to improve your RPG campaign.

A good notebook should be small enough to be portable, but have lots of pages. I carry a medium-size spiral-bound one that allows me to stuff an ink pen down the spiral. After four years of use my notebook is an ungodly mess, but it's a lifesaving mess for me. I suppose you could also use a good lap-top or notebook computer, with a tape recorder on trips, but I prefer the old-fashioned, low-cost, low-tech, doesn't-need-batteries route.

Whenever you get a good idea for your game campaign, jot it down. It's simple, but you have to keep doing it. In this way, you lock each idea into your conscious and unconscious minds. Even if you forget the idea entirely later, it's still in your head, where it bumps against other ideas and begins to ferment. After only a couple of weeks of this, you'll have all sorts of ideas about things to stick into your science-fiction campaign—and the ideas will keep on coming, nonstop!

Anyone can use this tactic to become an original and exciting GM. The people who run confused or lifeless campaigns are often those who do little work on the adventures and set-up. You can take the better and more scenic route.

Drivin' & Writin'

When I drove to ICON 17, I was trying to think of adventuring ideas for a group of interstellar wanderers who had their own starship. I gave myself a specific problem to work on. The adventurers were going to land on an airless, low-gravity world with a large, long-settled population: How could I make that world stand out? What little touches would make both make use of the setting and make for a better adventure there?

As I drove the long miles to the convention and back, I jotted down anything that came to mind that might be useful in building up either the world setting or particular adventures on that world. As you will see, nearly everything I wrote down was related in some way to the scenery that I saw along the way. I let the things I noticed on the trip trigger new ideas by free association. If I saw a cow (and I did, lots of them), I thought about cattle, dairy and beef products, and how people on an airless world would feed themselves.

Herds of cows would be difficult to raise at best, as you could well imagine. I then recalled a proposal some years ago for space colonists to raise rabbits for their meat, since rabbits are small and easily fed and cared for. I decided there must be a way to stick a "rabbit ranch" into a scenario—and so on. You get the idea.

Details are important in developing a setting in any role-playing game. In a science-fiction game, details are critical in permitting players to suspend their disbelief and accept the game universe as "real." Players can easily picture and accept mundane details, like tables and chairs; unusual, specific, but logical details, however, are necessary to make the setting really come alive. I let my mind fill in those necessary details as I came up with each new idea.

If I put a rabbit ranch in an airless-world scenario, for instance, it helps if I also mention that the "ranch" is actually just a large, roughly carved underground room the size of a school gymnasium, its ceiling covered with lights and its floor with hundreds of cute gray bunnies hopping around in granular "rabbit litter." The door leading in has a hand-lettered sign warning visitors to not let any rabbits out. A veterinarian's office is down the hall. And, of course, the place simply stinks to high heaven. That's detail the players will believe in.

Xeroing In

Let us then build this low-gravity, airless world, which we'll call Xero. (Why? Oh, the world's original name was a string of numbers, most of them zeroes, and the miners who first settled the world shortened it to Zero. The change to Xero—pronounced just like "Zero"—

was a mining company's marketing ploy to give the world a more attractive name and draw more settlers.) Xero is suitable for use in a variety of "old universe" interstellar SFRPGs, such as GDW's *Traveller: The New Era*, FASA's *Star Trek: The RPG* and *BattleTech*, TSR's STAR FRONTIERS® game, and West End's *Star Wars: The RPG*.

Item seen: The highway itself, stretching off to the horizon, running from city to city.

SF idea: Xero, I'd decided, is long-settled, so it probably has more than one major city. As the surface is airless and probably bombarded by micrometeorites and intense radiation, all such cities must be underground. Travel can be made overland by tracked or wheeled all-terrain vehicles, thus a long-established world would surely have a number of regular surface highways. These roads would be paved, clearly marked, and (given that the world rotates so that there are regular cycles of day and night) well lit with artificial lights. The highways would connect underground cities, industrial zones, scientific outposts, landing zones, and so on.

I recall that some books about near-future bases on Earth's Moon say that cheap concrete could be easily made from the dust, rock, and debris on the lunar surface, when properly heated and treated. Perhaps huge construction vehicles drive slowly across the surface of Xero, building highways as they go. Of course, "unimproved roads" (paths marked only by the ruts left by previous vehicles and the junk that travelers have left behind) could go everywhere. Travel on improved roads would be smooth and relatively quick, but still not free of all driving hazards (solar storms, drunk or sleepy drivers, equipment failure, landslides, etc.).

Item seen: A freight train on a railroad line alongside I-88 in Illinois, just west of Rochelle.

SF idea: From my readings in astronomy and astronautics, I know that surface travel on any airless body is considered hazardous. Solar flares can kill with their high levels of radiation, and a hit from a micrometeorite, though rare, would blast any airtight compartment. It makes sense to have fast rail transport, then, and it helps to put it underground. We've done this for years in major cities on Earth.

I can easily imagine that Xero, being an older colony, has plenty of underground high-speed railroads running from city to city to fill its transportation needs. Player characters would likely use these if they had business in several spots across Xero and needed to get around in a hurry. Passenger trains, of course, are excellent places to meet new friends, make new enemies, and become embroiled in dangerous new adventures. Think of how trains were used in various dramatic movies like *Silver Streak* or *Murder on the Orient Express*.

Why would anyone drive around on the surface, then? Well, trains can't do everything. Structures such as communications facilities, spacecraft launching and landing sites, surface mines, geological sites, and observatories are likely to be aboveground, and first-hand surface exploration would be important if particular minerals or artifacts are needed, or if satellites indicate anomalies that close-up investigation can identify. Some of Xero's cities might not yet be served by the underground rail system, and some rail systems might break down, forcing overland "truckers" to haul freight back and forth. Given the previously mentioned hazards, it is likely that surface vehicles would be restricted for use within a certain distance of major cities, so their crews can get to shelter if a solar storm strikes, but their usefulness is still great.

Item seen: A beautiful, tree-lined, much-needed rest area along I-80 in Iowa.

SF idea: Of course, for long-distance travel over Xero, there should be regularly spaced underground shelters along any surface highway. Shelters would have emergency first-aid supplies, food, vacuum suits, fuel, spare clothing, repair tools, recreational information, and communications facilities. And clean restrooms, of course.

A shelter would make an interesting place for an adventure to start. What if the PCs found an abandoned overland vehicle at a little-used shelter, with a murder victim hidden within it and evidence pointing to the kidnapping of a second person? What if a terrorist left a bomb in one rest area, disguised as a briefcase? It's worth a thought.

Item seen: A single-car accident in Illinois along I-88, just east of the Quad Cities (probably caused by someone who was writing down a note on gaming and went off the road).

SF idea: On an airless world, a vehicle accident on the surface is likely to be fatal—even if help arrives quickly. A distress message broadcast by radio (assuming there is an ionosphere or satellite available for signal-bouncing) could lead to a brief but daring rescue of endangered vehicle passengers.

But what if the "accident" was faked, a set-up for a robbery or hijacking? What if the vehicle had been attacked by a military force, and the PCs will encounter the same hostile force if they attempt a rescue? What if a rescued passenger turns out to be the person who sabotaged the vehicle, hoping to kill the other passengers and escape with their valuables? (The PCs ruined the plan, of course.) And it might be the PCs' vehicle that gets into trouble and needs rescuing.

Item seen: Numerous road-building vehicles along a section of torn-up highway around Rockford, Illinois, and a half-dozen other places (particularly on I-80 in Iowa, which was a mess).

SF idea: It would be a nice touch to have construction activity going on across Xero's surface when the PCs visit. It's good in part as "living background," to give the impression that Xero has an active civilization and is in constant flux (and thus intrinsically interesting to the players). An array of unusual industrial vehicles in an airless, low-gravity setting also adds color and interest to a setting (huge orange bulldozers, yellow cranes, and a mobile medical vehicle, all covered with flashing lights).

Construction activity, of course, can produce adventures. What if workers dig up an alien artifact, like the black monolith on the Moon in *2001: A Space Odyssey*? What if the PCs investigate a megacorporation's secret construction site in a hidden valley, discovering that it more resembles a military command facility? What if a criminal gang steals a load of explosives, and the PCs must fight bad guys driving digging or bulldozing equipment? Hmmm . . .

Item seen: A violent thunderstorm in central Illinois, along I-88 near Dixon ("The boyhood home of Former President Ronald Reagan!").

SF idea: In the previous issue of this Newszine, readers of this column were encouraged to "put weather in" when designing adventures. Admittedly, airless worlds don't have much in the way of weather, which leads many bored

adventurers to cry, "This place has no atmosphere!" (Ha ha—a little joke there. Okay, forget it.) Seriously, there are some interesting "special effects" that you can add to an airless environment:

Δ **Solar flares**. Gigantic radiation bursts from the local sun are likely to be quite common, as these have been detected by real-world astronomers from many stars like our own Sun. Unshielded crews caught on the surface as a solar flare hits (sometimes with less than an hour's warning) may die of severe radiation poisoning; this awful possibility was explored by author James Michener in his novel *Space*, which detailed a hypothetical Apollo mission gone bad. Thick rock or lead will block radiation.

Δ **Micrometeorite "shower."** Depending on the amount of debris in the system, this event would either be unknown or, at best, just extremely rare. It is more likely for PCs to run across recent meteorite strikes that blew up or blocked roadways, smashed vehicles or buildings, or otherwise caused damage than for the PCs to deal with a direct strike. But then, you never know when the sky will fall . . . .

Δ **Volcanic eruptions.** Some areas of the Moon are suspected of having volcanic activity, and the Jovian satellite Io is covered with active sulfur volcanoes. Even a small world can have volcanos if it has a hot core. (It is thought that Mercury does, and Mercury is airless and has about one-third Earth's gravity.) Eruptions could include ash falls, bombardments with large cinders, lava flows and lava lakes, explosive bursts, earthquakes, geysers (if trapped underground water or ice is released), or hot gas releases. A gigantic ash cloud spreading out from a volcanic explosion would be an awe-inspiring—and frightening—sight. Don't get caught in one.

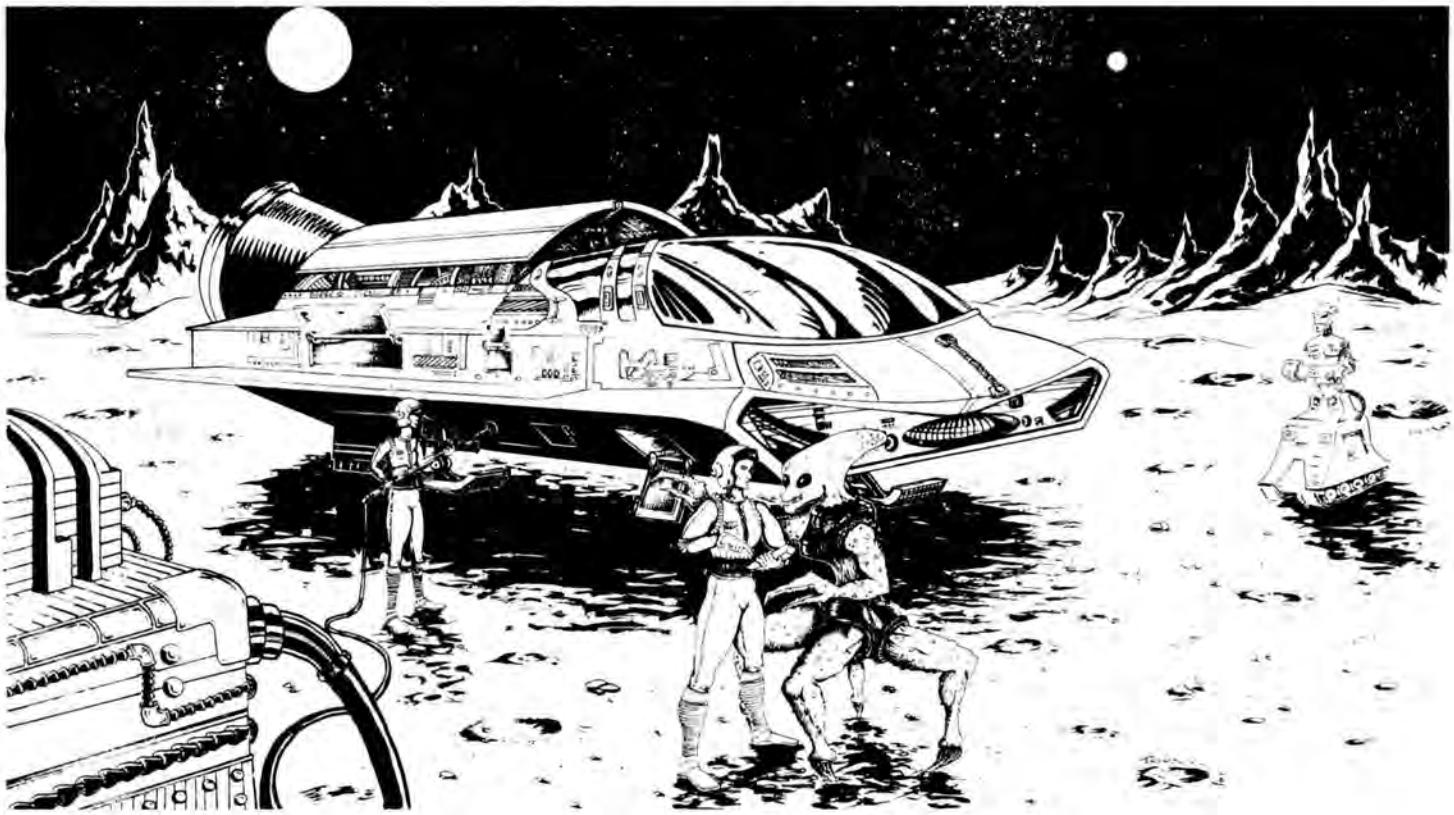
Δ **Earthquakes and landslides.** Small, airless worlds are unlikely to have mobile continental plates simply because they are small, so any regular earthquakes would likely result from cooling and contracting rock deep in the interior. Landslides and rolling boulders jarred loose by quakes would cause plenty of trouble in mountainous and sloping areas.

Item seen: The huge I-80 bridge crossing the Mississippi River at a scenic spot between Illinois and Iowa.

SF idea: Airless worlds like the Moon and Mercury have quite varied terrain, including rifts, escarpments, mountains, craters, lava plains, and more. Roads crossing rough areas would likely need bridges and tunnels, which are dramatic settings in their own right. (Picture, in a cinematic sense, a fight on a high bridge or an escape from a tunnel collapse.)

It is interesting, too, to speculate on what sorts of "rivers" might exist on airless worlds. Water, of course, would either freeze or boil away almost instantly, thanks to vacuum and local temperatures. However, certain heavy gases might form in pools or lakes on the surface, and molten rock (from volcanoes) would make striking scenery. Substances we know as gases on Earth, like methane, might be liquid on cold, airless ones. Liquid sulfur runs across the surface of Io, thanks to its hot sulfur volcanos. You'll have to examine astronomy and chemistry texts to figure out the possibilities. A great sea of weird, smoking liquid would make a great backdrop to an adventure.

Now that I'm thinking of water, I must remember to include water sources on Xero to support its population. There might be huge "seas" of water-ice on the surface or buried underground, waiting for people to dig it out and treat it so it can be used. More ice might be found at the poles, where sunlight is less likely to boil it away. Studies indicate that the Earth's Moon might have no water at



all, but oxygen could be mined from the soil. Hydrogen could be shipped in to create water when mixed with the oxygen, but you'd need an easily reached reservoir of hydrogen to do that.

Perhaps there's a low-gravity world nearby with large supplies of methane or ammonia, from which hydrogen can be taken; private companies or government agencies would be responsible for shipping the hydrogen in. Getting water will be a primary concern to Xero's government and people.

Item seen: Brightly lit advertising signs that I could see for miles, at a truck stop in Iowa.

SF idea: A long-settled world could have companies that want to advertise their products, particularly if the world was settled by employees of a major corporation (or two) mining or otherwise using the planet. Cities can even advertise themselves to get more immigrants or workers. Beyond advertising, signs will be needed for many purposes.

PCs driving across the surface of Xero, then, might see all sorts of peculiar things, thanks to advanced technology and clever marketing departments. An automatic laser-light show, played out on a cliff face, might direct viewers to an assortment of restaurants and stores in the city ahead. Flashing yellow and red lights would warn of surface hazards, accidents, or construction zones. An artist might construct what appears to be a dinosaur within a perfectly realistic forest of trees along one stretch of highway, just for the sake of doing it. And who says there can't be (gasp) billboards? (Residents of Xero might feel the "ad pollution" on the surface has gotten out of control.)

Item seen: The "Time Museum" and giant water park in Rockford, Illinois, and (of course) the boyhood home of Ronald Reagan in Dixon.

SF idea: Every world will eventually get its own historical landmarks, museums, theme parks, and so forth. These can make excellent settings for adventures; think of Mt. Rushmore in North by Northwest, or the scenic spots in the James Bond movies. An extinct volcano, a valley where ancient aliens once set up a colony, the site of the first human landing on the world, the birthplace of a space-navy admiral, crashed wreckage from an orbital battle—there are all sorts of possibilities. An historical spot could even create an adventure in itself. The site of the first colony on Xero might contain old computerized files indicating the presence of an unknown spacecraft in a remote mountain range.

A scientist PC digging through the files for mundane research might wish to investigate what that spacecraft was doing there, and would set up an expedition to investigate the site further. An alien spy? An illegal corporation mining facility? A military craft setting up a secret base? Finding out could be quite exciting, if not deadly.

Item seen: The huge sign welcoming me back to Wisconsin, along I-90 south of Beloit.

SF idea: Political boundaries on an airless world? It's certainly possible. If the world has valuable resources, corporations or off-world nations might negotiate surface boundaries to avoid conflicts over mining rights, to assign responsibilities for law enforcement, and so on.

Underground cities could be split up into political blocs that could be either cooperative, isolationist, or hostile. The cities of one bloc might be woven together by a web of highways, underground train tunnels, and communications lines; a rival bloc might rely on short-hopping spacecraft for transport; a third, poorly funded and poorly organized group might have only surface roads between its cities and minor settlements.

Once you add nations to the picture, the list of adventuring ideas grows enormously. Spies, warriors, diplomats, agencies, trade groups, exchange students, industrial firms—all spring from the rivalry between different countries, even on airless worlds.

Following the guidelines given in this column in issue #85, I can loosely base the political situation on Xero on any of a number of groups of nations or cities from history or current events. Two models suggest themselves after some thought: the nations of Europe (so that Xero has a large number of allied city-states attempting to achieve global unity, though all are currently suffering a serious recession) or the nations of the Pacific Rim (so that Xero has many highly competitive and fast-growing city-states, some extremely hostile to one another).

Item seen: The names of the places I passed by or saw on the map: Rock Island, Iowa City, Davenport, etc.

SF idea: The easiest way to assign names to the cities and places on Xero was to pick out existing names and tweak them just a bit, so they sounded realistic and different at the same time. A glance at highway signs and the map showed some cities had names with obvious derivations (Central City, Iowa City, Rock Falls) and some were probably named after people (Moline, Bettendorf, Davenport). It also showed that a theme cannot be repeated too many times (Rockford, Rockport, Rock City, Rock Falls, Rockton, Rock Island, etc.).

For Xero, the following city names suggested themselves, based on the above cues: Xeroton, Xero City, Great Xero Crater, Black Sea (an old lava flow, like the maria on the Moon), Starry Valley, Twin Mountain, Splash Peak (in an old crater's central mountain), Rimwall (also in a crater), and Z-Town (once called Zerotown, from the old days). A glance at a Lake Geneva phone book provides some interesting city names based on people's names—a mostly European selection, with a few modifications: Berkholtz Plains, Cascioburg, Esposito-Singh, Gerhardt Bay (a crater city), Kremerton, Lenz, New Magnusson, Ramirez, Reczynski, Sontag, Sturmhaven, Schwartz Hill, and Van Zeeland City.

Cities where many agricultural products are grown by corporations might be named Agro-One, Agro-Two, etc., with more colorful names like Paradisio and Green Heaven creeping in. If Xero was largely founded for its mineral value or for low-gravity, vacuum-based industries, you could also get: Iron City, Five Factories, Titan (for the titanium mine near it), Thorcorp (named for the corporation that founded it), and Funnel (adjacent to a funnel-shaped, open-pit surface mine).

That should do it for examples. In my notes, I had also written down ideas for Xero gleaned from seeing farms, industrial parks, police cars, toll booths, power stations, monuments, military bases, odd rock formations, and radio stations I listened to. You can take it from there for your own campaign, and make the setting come alive and grow.

Weasel Games

Nukes . . . Why Did It Have To Be Nukes?

by Lester Smith

Weasel games are all about underhanded, sneaky, manipulative play in which your current ally becomes your deadliest enemy—but neglects to tell you so until after sabotaging your plans.

But there is a serious side to weasel games as well. In a way, they serve as a modern morality play. Let me explain.

An Omnivore Speaks

I have three problems with vegetarianism. First, human beings have teeth designed for an omnivorous diet; some are for grinding vegetables, and others are for tearing meat. Second, there are a few essential nutrients that we cannot get from strictly vegetarian fare. Third, plants are living beings too, and I don't see what's intrinsically better about killing them rather than animals.

Nonetheless, slaying animals feels worse to most people, even to omnivorous ones. Recently, at a burger joint, I asked some friends if they would be willing to tour a slaughterhouse with me. The consensus response was, "Euwww! We don't want to see that." Lest readers think me some sort of ghoul, let me explain that my reason for wanting to tour a slaughterhouse is not to revel in the killing. Rather, I want to face the fact that animals are dying and being butchered for my consumption. It's a thought that is easy to ignore while chewing on processed, packaged meats. But I don't think we do ourselves any favors by remaining blissfully ignorant.

So what does all this have to do with weasel games? Well, like vegetarians watching burgers fry, or pretty much anyone visiting a slaughterhouse, some people find weasel games distasteful. Their sensibilities are offended by the thought that in these games, players use every cutthroat, back-stabbing, sneaky trick they can think of in order to win.

I'm of the opposite opinion. Ignoring an aspect of human nature doesn't make it go away, and repressing it just forces it to manifest in more subtle ways. Weasel games, on the other hand, provide safe, fictional arenas in which we can explore our darker, competitive side. In doing so, we achieve a catharsis. But catharsis isn't the only benefit weasel games have to offer. In them, we also get a chance to see how distasteful "weaselness" can be in real life.

Chills from the Cold War

I grew up during the sixties. As a result, I spent my childhood with the fear of a mushroom cloud hanging over my head, so to speak. I'm still stunned that the US had the audacity to use an A-bomb on Hiroshima, and then again on Nagasaki six days later. I imagine the rest of the globe walking on egg shells, wondering when we might get angry and do it again. The thought of nukes disturbs me.

About six years ago, while attending a game convention in Los Angeles, I noticed some people playing the brand new *Supremacy* game. It is a game of power politics in the 20th Century, in which players wrestle for control of three primary assets: grain, minerals, and oil. In part, the struggle is an economic one: As players buy and sell on the world market, prices rise and fall dramatically in response, and clever players can manipulate the market to make themselves rich at everyone else's expense. But straight-up warfare also plays a part in the game, with troops and fleets moving about to defend or attack resource areas. And then there are the nukes.

The nukes were the first thing I noticed about the game. Play was pretty well along in that Los Angeles game when I happened by, and several black plastic mushroom clouds stood upon the war-room-style, political map. It all looked so clean and antiseptic, the playing pieces so far from the blasted ruins they represented, that I shuddered.

A few years later, a friend picked up a copy of the game and asked me by to play. I gave it a try . . . several times, in fact. Overall, the game is admirable, with a solid design and high quality components. I love manipulating the market. But I can't get over the nukes. There are two moments in play I find particularly chilling because of what they have to say about our world.

The first one is an artifact of how nukes are constructed. To build nukes in the game, you first have to pay for the design research. You pay a base amount of cash and resources, then begin flipping cards from the resource deck, paying an additional amount of cash for each one, until finally a nuke card turns up. Your turn ends there, with one nuke built—the prototype.

Next turn, you can build any number of additional nukes, simply by paying a flat amount of cash and resources for each one. Typically, because I focused on playing the market, I was the first player to build nukes. Thus, whenever another player decided to research them, I was faced with an insidious decision: "Do I blast him off the face of the Earth now, before he can build a retaliatory set of nukes; or do I let him join the nuclear club." The temptation to get the first-strike in was strong, and it made me wonder how the human race ever survived the sixties' cold war. I guess the fact that we did says something positive about us.

The second scary moment involves games in which a number of nukes have been dropped. The rules impose a limit of 13; after that the global ecosystem is so screwed up that nobody wins. But if I am losing the game already, and twelve nukes have been dropped, I am tempted to play nuclear terrorist, threatening to drop the 13th if the other players don't give me some serious concessions. Again, the real-world implications are frightening. All it takes is one nuke in the hands of someone desperate enough, and a city of ten million people or more goes up in radioactive smoke.

Remember, the basic premise of the *Supremacy* game is control of world resources. It's not about sharing, but about domination, and that is what leads to two such chilling moments. These moments are what makes it serve so well as a morality play.

The Raven Express

They Deliver Messages—And More

by Brian Vogel

When the fine citizens of Ravens Bluff need to send an urgent message to a neighboring city, they use Raven Express. When a thief needs a fence to get hot property out of the city in a hurry, he uses Raven Express. Legov Nairb, founder of the business, has trained ravens to deliver small packages to nine other cities in the region.

Legov runs Raven Express out of a two-story stone building in the city's merchant district. The first floor comprises the shop where customers drop off and pick up their packages.

The second floor serves as Legov's living quarters. The roof contains the bird coops which house the ravens when they are not delivering packages.

Customers entering Raven Express are greeted by a smiling Legov. He is a rotund man who devotes little time to his appearance. His clothes are of fine quality, but generally unkempt. Legov infrequently combs his hair, leaving it usually the appearance of . . . er, a bird's nest. He exhibits a pleasant disposition but has a temper which can ignite at a moment's notice. Jokes about his weight frequently send Legov into a tirade. He often eats while talking to customers, and he has the impolite habit of talking with his mouth full.

Customers can send a letter or a small item weighing less than four ounces to one of nine cities in the region. After a customer drops off a package for delivery, Legov places it in a miniature scroll tube. The tube is sealed with wax to protect the contents from water. Legov then attaches the tube to the leg of one of his ravens, which—like the famous carrier pigeons—is trained to fly to the destination city.

The bird is released and almost always without fail flies to the appropriate city. Each destination city has a similar office tended by one of Legov's agents. The agents then dispatch runners to deliver the message or package to the recipient.

Delivery time and cost for messages to each city are:

City	Delivery Time	Cost/GP
Calaunt	1	10
Tantras	1/2	7
Procampur	1	10
Tsurlagol	2	15
Westgate	10	50
Mulmaster	4	25
Hillsfar	5	30
Saerloon	7	35
Phlan	8	40

Legov Nairb

5th Level Male Human Thief

STR: 10
INT: 14
WIS: 13
DEX: 17
CON: 13
CHA: 16
AC: 5
Hit Points: 14
Alignment: Neutral Evil
Languages: Common, Thieves Cant
THAC0: 18
Age: 44
Height: 5' 9"
Weight: 240
Hair/Eyes: White/Blue
Weapon Proficiencies: Short sword
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Appraising (14), forgery (17), gem cutting (15), direction sense (14), animal training (13), animal handling (13)
Magic Items Carried: *Ring of protection +2, ring of avian control*

Legov Nairb was born to a wealthy merchant family in Ravens Bluff. Running the family business did not appeal to young Legov. Not only was trading boring, but it involved entirely too much work. As a young man, Legov devoted himself entirely to his two passions: eating and bird watching. Legov's love of food made him fat, but his love of birds was even greater. As a child, he spent hours on the roofs watching the ravens fly back and forth. On one particular day, Legov saw a piece of metal glinting in a raven's nest. He found a simple gold ring. As he slipped the band on his finger, he found that it could actually control the birds. Soon after Legov discovered the ring, his parents grew weary of his slothfulness and evicted him from their home. Legov's savings soon disappeared, leaving him penniless and homeless. He used the *ring of avian control* to command birds to pick up small items out of open windows in order to sustain himself. After several months of this hand-to-mouth existence, a mid-level thief named Thorn discovered Legov and his unusual power.

Thorn took Legov into his home and became his mentor. The two pulled off big heists combining Legov's control of birds with Thorn's thieving skills. Together, they became quite wealthy.

After a year with Thorn, Legov grew weary of the life of a thief and retired to use his birds to deliver messages to other cities, just as other people did with pigeons. Thorn convinced Legov to provide a smuggling service as well, and so Raven Express became one of the most profitable fencing operations in the city.

Legov hired thieves (all acquantances of Thorn) in each location to run the branch offices. Raven Express's legitimate customers consist mainly of merchants. They use Legov's services to keep in touch with their agents abroad.

While Legov earns a substantial income from his merchant business, it serves primarily as a front for the more lucrative fencing operation. Thieves throughout Ravens Bluff use the service to dispose of valuable but highly identifiable stolen goods. Legov specializes in fencing unique jewelry, sending it to an agent who sells the merchandise with little fear of it being recognized. The agent then relays the sales price to Legov, who forwards the purchase price, less a 20% commission, to the thief.

Legov also derives substantial income from selling the information he obtains from the letters he delivers. His promise of strict confidentiality is a hollow lie. On more than one occasion, he actually changed the message at the request of his customer's generous competitors. Legov has also used the information to blackmail former customers who revealed compromising information in their messages. Legov will not cooperate with the authorities for fear that they will shut down his fencing operation.

Classifieds

Attention: Anyone telephoning RPGA® Network Headquarters! HQ is not available for calls on Tuesdays and Thursdays before 1:00 p.m. Central time.

Attention ARC-Fellowship Members: The 2nd Annual ARC Banquet is scheduled for October 8, 1994. The banquet will once again be held in conjunction with Hexacon in Greensboro, NC. You must be a guest of Hexacon '94 to attend. For more information about the banquet and the con, write: Hexacon '94, c/o Sherrie Miller, Box 4, EUC, UNC-G, Greensboro, NC 27403. The cost of the banquet is $16/member, and seating is limited.

Attention Modem Users: GEnie and internet mail gives us a great new medium for communication, and the volume of e-mail for each of the TSR accounts is rising steadily. To be sure you reach the right account, please use the tsr.rpga@genie.geis.com address to contact RPGA Network HQ. Use tsr.mags@genie.geis.com to write to DUNGEON® or DRAGON® Magazines, and tsr.online@genie.geis.com for contacting TSR in general. Please keep letters that need replies brief and concrete, and never send unsolicited manuscripts. And if your message is intended for an individual, be sure to include that person's name at the top of your letter.

Attention Network Tournament Writers: Chaosium will award products to Network authors whose Chaosium game tournaments are submitted and sanctioned. For more information, send a SASE to: Tournaments/D.G. Dennis, 11001 Magnolia Pk., Oklahoma City, OK 73120, or direct all e-mail to donald.dennis@oubbs.telecom.uoknor.edu.

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For Sale: Miniatures, 1st and 2nd edition AD&D® game products, IBM games (including Campaign Cartographer, $50), and much more. Up to 1/3 off! Write to: Chris Perry, 23309 Richfield Road, Corning, CA 96021.

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Israel: I am a 20-year-old player of many systems, and I'm looking for contact with other AD&D game players. I have played in all the game settings. I would like to contact other DMs who have played in these worlds and who are looking for even more magical and fantastic worlds. Also, I'm looking for players interested in the 3D SPELLJAMMER® game tactical battles idea. Contact me at: 20th Herbert Samoel Street, Petah Tiqua City, Israel, 49429.

New York: Have you been looking all over town for a role-playing group to join? Can't find anyone nearby who games? If you live in the Westchester County area and are around the age of 12, your problems are solved! If you want to join an AD&D game group, call (914) 238-3612 and ask for Matt Smith.

New York: the Hudson Valley Gamer Network (HVGN) publishes a newsletter and plans a gamers' directory for December 1994. Any gamer in NY State can get on the mailing list; the directory will be limited to gamers in Orange, Ulster, Sullivan, Duchess, Putnam, Westchester, and Rockland counties. Write to Hudson Valley Gamer Network, c/o Spencer E. Hart, RD 1, Box 636, New Hampton NY 10958.

Pen Pal: Looking for a fellow gamer (either gender) in New Zealand to discuss role-playing games, music, books, computer communications, immigration procedures, and life. That should cover it. Anyone else who wants to write to me in English or Spanish (you se un poco) is welcome. I'll answer all letters, but I'm not guaranteeing they'll be answered quickly. I'm a 20-year-old male gamer (too many systems to list) who's currently studying engineering and working in the auto industry. Write to me on the Internet at af696@leo.nmc.edu or Edward Elsner, 9304 Wabun Court, Flushing, MI 48433-1219, USA.

Wanted: Network Judges for Spring Revel, March 16-19th, 1995. We are looking for people to run Network and other role-playing, board, and SF miniatures games. If you have what it takes to run a great game, contact us as soon as possible. All judges who run four or more slots receive free admission. We are also interested in contacting more dealers who would like to attend. Write or call: Keith Polster, Box 27, Theresa, WI 53091, (414) 488-2037.

Wanted: Network Judges for the Game Fair. Don't forget that Network judges who run three or more slots pay only $10 for admission to the convention. Don't let your judge level languish: advance both as a player and a judge! If you would like to help the Network by running games, send a note with the times and events for which you're available to: RPGA Network Judge Appeal, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva WI, 53147.

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